Student perspectives on school camps: A photo-elicitation interview study

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Applied Science at Lincoln University by E. F. Smith

Lincoln University 2008
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by

E. F. Smith

First-hand narrative accounts of participants’ experiences during outdoor programmes are notably absent from the outdoor education literature. This thesis reports on an exploratory study which applied a creative qualitative approach called photo-elicitation interviews to gather student accounts about the ways in which they experienced an outdoor education programme known as ‘school camp’.

A group of Year 10 (14-15 years old) students attending secondary school in Christchurch, New Zealand, participated in this study, and were provided with 27-exposure, disposable cameras on which they were asked to take a series of photographs to demonstrate what a residential school camp was like for them. Follow-up, individual photo-elicitation interviews with the 32 self-selected respondents (21 female, 11 male), revealed that school camp is primarily an enjoyable, social experience where students are able to spend time with their friends and develop their peer networks in a unique environment. From the perspective of these students, school camp primarily contributed to developing a greater understanding of others, while developing greater understandings of the self and the environment were less salient.

A greater understanding of others was achieved primarily through the ways in which school camp created an enjoyable, novel, experience which allowed students to see their peers from a different, more ‘real’ perspective. Aspects of this novel experience which contributed to students’ social interactions included the residential nature of these camps and the absence of ‘urban’ features associated with teenage culture such as mobile phones, clothing and make-up. Interestingly, students’ camp experiences included little specific reference to the natural
environment; a finding which challenges recent discourses advocating for a shift towards a more critical outdoor education aiming to promote human-nature relationships.

The use of photo-elicitation interviews in this context is critically examined. Providing students with cameras was an effective way to engage young people in academic research and to capture important aspects of the outdoor experience from their perspective. To better assess the utility of the technique, it warrants further application in other outdoor education contexts. The inclusion of participant-generated photographs, however, raises several research ethics issues. This study contributes to the growing body of qualitative literature seeking to provide a more in-depth understanding of outdoor education and complements the quantitative studies which predominate in the field.

**Keywords:** Outdoor education, school camp, photo-elicitation interviews, student experience, New Zealand, student perspectives, residential outdoor programmes, social interaction, greater understanding of others, greater understanding of self, greater understanding of the environment
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It was one of the worst Dunedin days (pouring with rain) as we tried to pack up the vehicles for our last school camp. Nevertheless, at 9:30am we left for Tautuku, squashed in the back with food, leaving St Hilda’s behind for a whole week.

On arrival, [a staff member] donned those infamous rubber gloves of hers, and together with an imaginary toilet out the front she demonstrated the intricate art of hygienically scrubbing the rim and bowl of a toilet.

That afternoon, we were taken down to the beach for the annual Fourth Form sand sculpting competition. Although just about every group created mermaids, it seemed that on the day the less conventional approaches were preferred by the judging panel with a whale, seahorse and turtle taking out the first three places in this prestigious competition.

The next few days were filled with exciting activities such as abseiling, juggling, canoeing, rock climbing; and who can forget wading through the thigh deep mud for [a] couple of hours in order to survive that infamous tram track. There was also the day hike, during which we deviated to the lighthouse where we were able to meet the lady who lives there, and sample her fine cooking.

Each night we tried our best to freak each other out with scary stories, though most just ending up being quite funny. Imaginations were alive and well!

On the last night we participated in the night line activity which was the ultimate test of wits, skill and composure. The Fourth Form, as expected, rose to the occasion – piercing shrieks and uncontrollable giggles reverberated around the bush scaring the wildlife, and one student was accused of stopping to talk to a tree!

After a fulfilled week we packed our gear and went home grateful for a warm, comfortable bed, even though it was still only mid-afternoon. A sure sign of a successful camp!

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1 This account was written by a Fourth Form student who attended Form Four camp in 1998. Prior to the introduction of ‘Years’ (e.g., Year 10), ‘Forms’ indicated year of schooling in New Zealand secondary schools. Form Four is equivalent to Year 10.
Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about school camp. School camps are but one form of school-based outdoor education practiced in New Zealand (Lynch, 2006). They occur in a plethora of forms and seem to be an accepted, perhaps even an expected, part of young New Zealanders’ schooling. Accounts of school camps, however, are largely limited to school magazine articles such as the one on the previous page. These articles are usually positive, convey the enjoyment of camp, and provide chronological insight into what happened at camp. From an academic perspective, though, first-hand student accounts of school camps have received little research attention. This thesis contributes to addressing this research gap by adopting a qualitative approach to investigating the student experience of school camp outdoor education programmes.

1.1 Context

 Reflexivity is a key concept that is becoming increasingly recognised within qualitative research. It is, however, a complex and difficult notion to define and it can be used in a number of different ways (Bingham, 2003). One way in which researchers can be reflexive is to recognise and reflect on the ways in which they impact on the research process (Richards, 2005). From this premise, I begin establishing the context in which this study took place by identifying who I am – the researcher. I will then situate the study within the wider outdoor education context, provide a brief overview of the study and outline how the thesis is organised.

During my secondary school years, I participated in several school camp outdoor education programmes. My recollections of my time at these camps seem unremarkable, yet they were certainly aspects of my schooling that I enjoyed. I remember completing the infamous mud run with my friends at Tautuku in the Catlins, and being one of two students to catch a fish on Lake Manapouri during a camping trip to Hope Arm. In retrospect (and no doubt with age), I appreciate the opportunities I was given to participate in activities such as camping, tramping, skiing and abseiling in a wide variety of outdoor environments, and I consider such opportunities to be a valuable part of young New Zealanders’ schooling. Although I can remember little of the specific details regarding these school camps, my parents always ensured I had a disposable camera to take with me; the photographs of which I have retained. Having taken photographs during my school camps, coupled with my reading of a photo-
elicitation interview study for one of my postgraduate classes, the possibility of using photographs to investigate the student experience of school camps was highlighted for me.

My tertiary studies in recreation, and more specifically outdoor recreation/education, have often challenged me to reflect on my own experiences in the outdoors. In light of the academic literature I read during my tertiary studies, one particular memory of an outdoor education programme in which I participated was somewhat puzzling. When I was eighteen years old, I went on the *Spirit of New Zealand*, a youth development programme on board a tall ship. Having studied outdoor education for five years now (and being currently involved with the Spirit of New Zealand as a volunteer crew member), I can identify outdoor education philosophy and practice in the programme that the ‘crew’ of the *Spirit of New Zealand* delivered to me and my fellow ‘trainees’.² Yet, I can distinctly remember that some of the important aspects of my experience on the ‘Spirit’ were never discussed during the programme, despite the implementation of de-briefing techniques commonly used in outdoor education. While these experiences were difficult to explain and I now have the benefit of hindsight (and age) to reflect on them, the academic outdoor education literature did not seem to ‘capture’ the complexity of my outdoor education experiences. From this position, my involvement in this study has impacted upon the study design, the data collection process, my interactions with the participants, and also the interpretations of the data collected which are presented in this thesis. Before presenting a brief overview of the study, I will situate the research within the wider outdoor education context.

In April 2008, an intense spotlight was shone on school-based outdoor education programmes as the result of a canyoning accident that occurred at the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre (Turangi, NZ), in which six student participants and their teacher died. The subsequent media interest and investigation into the accident primarily centred on issues of safety and responsibility. Just two days after the accident, the front page headline of *The Christchurch Press* read, “Why did these people die?” (“Why did these people die?,” 2008, April 17). This incident was part of the New Zealand outdoor education context at the same time this thesis was written. Although the participants in this research did not participate in a canyoning activity specifically, the situation is the same – schools contracting out the technical provision of outdoor activities to independent outdoor education centres. These canyoning fatalities,

² The term ‘trainees’ is used during Spirit of New Zealand youth development programmes to refer to the teenage participants.
however, were not the first to occur during school-based outdoor education activities, either in New Zealand or overseas.

Seven young people drowned while participating in outdoor education activities in New Zealand during 2000 and 2001. On the international stage, one of the most high profile outdoor education accidents occurred in 1993 at Lyme Bay, England, where four teenagers drowned during a school kayaking trip provided by an independent outdoor activity centre. The activity centre and the managing director of the centre were subsequently convicted of manslaughter. These convictions initiated new legislation and licensing governing the provision of outdoor education activities in Britain (Fulbrook, 2005). To date, no criminal charges have been laid against schools in New Zealand, their teachers or outdoor centres as a result of fatalities in the outdoors. In a competitive sporting context, however, Astrid Anderson, the organiser of a cycle race (Le Race) in which a competitor died, was convicted of criminal nuisance in 2003. Although the verdict was later successfully appealed, this event caused school principals and teachers to become increasingly reluctant to organise school events with outdoor components and to be more concerned about their personal liability when doing so. The Ministry of Education responded to these concerns by providing schools with guidance and resources to assist them with organising safe outdoor education programmes which may involve an inherent degree of risk for their students (Anon, 2004). While this support from central government is invaluable, academics have argued that society is becoming increasingly preoccupied with monitoring and mitigating risk – “the risk society” (Beck, 1992, p. 22; see, also; Douglas, 1992; Furedi, 1997); therefore, expectations for risk and safety management continue to increase in New Zealand schools. Within this social and political context, the provision of residential outdoor education camps becomes more challenging.

These new societal expectations and the occurrence of the accidents detailed above have led researchers to begin investigating the nature of outdoor accidents involving school pupils, how these accidents might be prevented, and how outdoor education activities might be made safer for children (see, for example, Brookes, 2002/2003, 2003, 2004; Davidson, 2008). While in the past, outdoor educators needed to justify their programmes primarily to secure funding, now outdoor educators must also justify their programmes in terms of the risk they pose to students. Amidst this desire to make outdoor programmes safer is also a concern that a focus on risk aversion is detracting from the benefits that young people gain from participating in outdoor programmes (Fulbrook, 2005).
Justification for outdoor programmes has primarily been achieved through investigation of the benefits accrued to participants. Typically, the benefits of outdoor education programmes have been investigated using quantitative, instrument-based, research approaches. For the most part, these studies report positive psychological outcomes on the part of participants (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). These studies are primarily researcher-driven and reflect what “should or ought to happen” during outdoor education (Zink, 2005, p. 95). Consequently, much is known about whether or not an outdoor programme ‘works’ according to a set of pre-determined outcomes (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000), but less is known about the ways in which these outcomes are achieved and how participants experience outdoor programmes (Hattie et al., 1997; McKenzie, 2000). Zink (2005) identified this as being the “challenge for research in outdoor education”; the challenge is to investigate “what is, or rather the practices of outdoor education” (p. 95). To this end, qualitative methodologies that capture students’ accounts of their experiences have been suggested as being more appropriate (Barrett & Greenaway, 1995; Davidson, 2001; Gunn, 2006; Zink, 2004, 2005).

With this diversification in research approach, student accounts of their outdoor experiences could complement the quantitative studies which dominate the outdoor education field and could provide further insight into outdoor education experiences.

The present study investigates what school camp is from the perspective of the student. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is not to confirm the power and efficacy of outdoor education, but to explore the experiences of students during a school-based outdoor education programme.

Given that the student experience of school camps is the primary topic of investigation, from the outset it is important to define what is meant by the word ‘experience’. Defining ‘experience’ is not a simple matter however. To quote Wattrchow (2004), “Central to this paper is an assumption that knowing and communicating the qualities of ‘human experiencing’, an issue at the heart of outdoor pedagogy, is problematic” (p. 2). Yet, the word is used prolifically throughout social science research with little specific definition, including within the field of outdoor education. In the absence of a suitable definition, for the purposes of this thesis, the word ‘experience’ is used to refer to subjective, recollected interpretations and perceptions of a given event, in this case, school camp. Understanding ‘experience’ in this way, as the subjective interpretations of individuals, means that eliciting first-hand narratives of participants’ outdoor education experiences is integral to better understanding

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3 ‘Experience’ will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, Section 2.5.1.
outdoor education programmes because young people’s experiences might differ from the adult-intended purposes.

In this examination of student experience, this study employed a qualitative, exploratory research technique called photo-elicitation interviews. To the researcher’s knowledge, photo-elicitation interviews have only been used in one other study to investigate participant experience of the outdoors (see Loeffler, 2004a, 2004b; 2005). In Loeffler’s study, the respondents were of university-age and participated in a diverse range of university-based outdoor programmes which appear to be more outdoor recreation in nature, rather than outdoor education. The present study, then, is the first to apply the photo-elicitation interview method within a school-based, outdoor education context involving adolescent participants.

1.2 Overview of the study
To investigate the student experience of school camp, three secondary schools in Canterbury, New Zealand, which held an outdoor education camp during Term Four 2007 (the timeframe for data collection) were contacted and invited to allow their students to participate in this research. Two of the schools were based in suburban Christchurch and one was situated in a small rural community outside Christchurch. Of the three schools approached, the two suburban schools agreed to participate, but the rural school declined the invitation stating simply that the proposal would not work for its students at that time. For the purposes of this research, the two schools that did participate are known as Pewsey Vale and Athens Academy.

1.2.1 The schools
Pewsey Vale is a co-educational school and Athens Academy is a single-sex girls’ school. Both schools are state integrated schools and as such have a ‘special character’. In both cases, the schools hold Christian values and affiliations. The decile rating of both schools was 9. This decile rating is a socio-economic indicator comprising of five factors: household income, occupation, household crowding, educational qualifications, and income support received. It…

…indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from the low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10

4 “A state integrated school is a school with a special (religious) character, which has been integrated into the state system” (Kiwi Families, 2007).
Chapter One - Introduction

Schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. A school's decile does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix of the school (Ministry of Education, 2006, para. 1).

Based on this information, schools are then divided into ten equal groups known as deciles and they receive funding accordingly (Ministry of Education, 2006).

In co-operation with school staff, this photo-elicitation interview study was introduced to the students and a parental consent process suited to each school was implemented. Thirty-four Year 10 (14-15 years) students (ten male, twenty-two female) attending these two secondary schools participated in this study. All participants attended a multi-day, residential outdoor education programme as part of their schooling. In both schools, the accepted terminology to describe these programmes was ‘school camp’. While staff from both schools organised the camps, they outsourced the programme development and provision of technical outdoor activities to two different outdoor education centres in Canterbury, New Zealand.

Participants were provided with 27-exposure, disposable cameras with built-in-flashes and asked to take photographs at camp to illustrate what camp was like for them. The researcher developed the students’ films and these photographs served as conversation stimuli during an individual, in-depth interview. During the interview, students also completed five photo-statements and matched one of their photographs to each statement (the methods and procedures are discussed further in Chapter Three and Chapter Four).

To protect their identity, all participants in this study have been given pseudonyms. While the photographs students produced were an important aspect of this study, it is their interpretation of their photographs that is of primary research interest. Although consent was gained from both the participants and their parents for their photographs to be used in any presentation of the results (providing all identifying features of persons depicted were removed), meaningful inclusion of the images was difficult without breaching respondents’ anonymity. Where their anonymity could be maintained, some photographs have been included for illustrative purposes only.

1.3 Research objectives

The following research objectives guided this research:
Chapter One - Introduction

1. To explore the ways in which New Zealand secondary school students experience a school-based outdoor education programme called ‘school camp’.

2. To utilise, apply and evaluate the usefulness of the photo-elicitation interview technique as a method of investigation into the ways in which students experience school-based outdoor education programmes.

1.4 Thesis organisation

This thesis is organised into nine chapters which are grouped into four parts. Part A forms the literature review of the thesis and consists of one chapter, Chapter Two. This chapter also presents the background and justification for the study. It explores the concept of outdoor education, provides a brief history of school camps in New Zealand and offers a critique of the research approaches used to investigate outdoor education programmes to date. The term ‘experience’ is also discussed. The argument presented concludes that there is a lack of qualitative studies investigating outdoor education, and a qualitative technique called photo-elicitation interviews warrants application in this field.

Following on from the argument established in Chapter Two, Part B details the methods used in this study. It comprises two chapters. Chapter Three examines the photo-elicitation interview method from a theoretical perspective, noting in particular that the technique is a useful way to obtain first-hand accounts of human experience and that it has been successfully used in studies involving children and young people conducted in other research fields. Chapter Four describes the procedures used to implement photo-elicitation interviews within the context of school camps for the study reported here.

Part C presents the results of the study and, also, comprises two chapters. Chapter Five focuses on the results generated from the photo-elicitation interviews and is organised around the dominant themes emphasised by students: ‘camp as fun’, ‘camp as social interaction’ and ‘camp as difference’. Chapter Six presents the results from each of the photo-statements. For each statement, bar charts are used to show the thematic structure of the students’ written statements. Throughout both chapters, participants’ quotes and statements are reproduced verbatim to substantiate the interpretations made and maintain the ‘voices’ of the students. Part C concludes with a short discussion comparing the results generated from the interviews and photo-statements.
Chapters Seven and Eight comprise Part D which forms the discussion of the thesis. Each of these chapters specifically addresses one of the two research objectives. In Chapter Seven, the ways in which the students of this study experienced school camp are discussed within the context of the current outdoor education literature. This discussion is presented using the following framework: greater understanding of others, of self and of the environment.\textsuperscript{5} The study is also discussed within the wider social-psychological and cultural context of young people today. Then, in Chapter Eight the usefulness of the photo-elicitation interview method to investigate student experience within an outdoor education context is evaluated. The thesis closes by identifying the limitations of the study, making recommendations for outdoor education practitioners and researchers, and offering concluding remarks in Chapter Nine.

\textsuperscript{5} This framework will be introduced and discussed in Chapter Two.
Chapter Two
RESEARCHING OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND SCHOOL CAMPS:
A LITERATURE REVIEW

Whether it is for educational or recreational purposes, there seems to be something inherently good about children being active in the outdoors. Yet, what is ‘good’ about outdoor education programmes is not easily definable. Despite this difficulty with articulating what is good, outdoor education, in different forms, has existed in New Zealand’s schooling for at least 100 years (Lynch, 2003, 2006).

This chapter is organised into six sections. In Section One, outdoor education is discussed. In Section Two, the discussion will shift to the New Zealand outdoor education context specifically. A brief history of school camping in New Zealand is provided in Section Three. The fourth section describes and discusses some of the common approaches that have been used to investigate outdoor education, noting in particular the prevalence of quantitative, outcome-focused studies. This discussion leads to consideration of the question ‘What is experience?’ within the context of outdoor education in Section Five. In the sixth and final section, qualitative methodologies are discussed as an alternative and highly appropriate method for investigating the nature of student experience in outdoor education.

2.1 What is ‘outdoor education’?
‘Outdoor education’ is a term that is not easily defined, as there seems to be little “semantic agreement” as to what it means (Boyes, 2000, p. 76). Outdoor educators have suggested numerous definitions of outdoor education, none of which can be considered universal. One difficulty in defining ‘what outdoor education is’ arises from the diversity of practices that often have the label ‘outdoor education’ attached to them (Zink, 2004). This diversity of practice has resulted in a myriad of terms that encapsulate ideas consistent with the different ways in which the term outdoor education is applied in the literature. Neill (2004a) identified 45 such terms: Among them, he listed adventure education, adventure programming, outdoor learning, outdoor recreation, wilderness experience, therapeutic recreation, environmental education, adventure therapy and camping. Another difficulty is that the meaning of outdoor education depends upon the context in which it is used (Brookes, 1991; cited in Boyes, 2000),
that is, ‘outdoor education’ will mean different things at different times depending on social, cultural and political values. While the necessity for local contextualisation is not unique to the field of outdoor education, it nonetheless contributes to the complexity of answering the question ‘What is outdoor education?’

One approach that can illuminate what outdoor education means is the identification of key words used within a range of outdoor education definitions. In a list of definitions generated by Neill (2004a), the most common key words used were education or learning, outdoor(s), environment, nature or wilderness, and adventure. Outdoor education can include all these concepts, but is also broader than these terms. One definition that attempts to capture this breadth is provided by Stothart (1998).

Outdoor education refers to education (i.e., curriculum based learning) which takes place in outdoor settings. The outdoor environment is deliberately chosen to enhance learning. It may embrace outdoor pursuits but not exclusively: it may occur in distant places but not necessarily (p. 23).

This definition identifies some of the concepts integral to outdoor education. First, outdoor education refers to activities undertaken for the purposes of education and, second, it allows for the use of a spectrum of outdoor settings, ranging from built urban environments (e.g., in the school grounds) to remote backcountry landscapes (i.e., distant places) (Gair, 1997; Hammerman, Hammerman, & Hammerman, 1994). Yet, outdoor education can still occur indoors. This was encapsulated by Donaldson and Donaldson (1958; cited in Neill, 2008) when they wrote that “outdoor education is education in, for and about the outdoors”.

Stothart’s definition also allows for non-pursuit based activities such as geography or biology field trips. However, it does not explicitly include one of the central pedagogical foundations of outdoor education – experiential learning. Formal outdoor education developed out of a progressive education ideology that is founded on the principles of experiential learning (Lynch, 2006). This is incorporated in the definition proposed by Priest (1999; see also Priest & Gass, 2005).

Outdoor education is an experiential method of learning with the use of all senses. It takes place primarily, but not exclusively, through exposure to the natural environment. In outdoor education the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships concerning people and natural resources (p. 111).

The foundations of experiential learning can be traced back to the Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. Plato advocated that children should be raised to take responsibility and
leadership in social life and that to do this they needed to be taught virtue. Aristotle expanded on this and said that the most appropriate way to learn virtue is to live the virtues through direct and purposeful experience (Hunt, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997). Direct and purposeful experience is central to the philosophy of experiential learning and, subsequently, to outdoor education (Priest & Gass, 2005).

Typically, though, outdoor education has been categorised into two streams: 6 adventure education and environmental education (Priest & Gass, 2005). Priest and Gass (2005) argued that both strands of outdoor education are concerned with relationships. Environmental education is primarily concerned with ecosystemic (“the interdependence of living organisms”) and ekistic (“interactions between human society and natural resources”) relationships. Adventure education focuses on interpersonal (“how people get along” in groups) and intrapersonal (“how an individual gets along with self”) relationships (p. 17). Although Priest’s definition above incorporates relational aspects of outdoor education, recent discourses have shifted towards emphasising ‘environmental education’ and sustainable nature-relations, rather than the more traditional personal and social development objectives. This theoretical shift has resulted in a new understanding of outdoor education called ‘critical outdoor education’ (Martin, 1999, 2004; Wattchow, 2007).

These two definitions of outdoor education by Stothart and Priest should not be considered universal definitions of outdoor education; they do, however, give an indication as to what outdoor education is and means. For the purposes of this thesis, the term outdoor education is used broadly to describe an approach to education that utilises the outdoors to provide a diverse range of educational opportunities which encourage greater understandings of self, others and the environment (Hales, 2006).

As noted by Brookes, however, “…any particular form of outdoor education can be understood as an expression of the ideas and assumptions of its protagonists and as a response to a particular set of conditions” (Brookes, 1991; cited in Boyes, 2000, p. 76). Thus, the purpose of outdoor education varies. Given that this thesis is, in general, about the outdoor education experiences of secondary students in New Zealand, it is important to consider how outdoor education has been conceptualised and practiced within this context. In accordance

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6 These streams are also consistent with Neill’s (2008) grouping of outdoor education definitions into the ‘psychosocial’ (adventure education) and ‘environmental’ (environmental education).
with the previous discussion, Lynch (2006) described outdoor education in New Zealand as a ‘package’.

Outdoor education was adopted in New Zealand schools as a particular ‘package’ of activities and intentions that were deemed to be beneficial to school children. These included: recreational physical activity in non-urban, outdoor spaces; nature study; social interaction between young people and between adults (particularly teachers) and the young; field work that extended the school curriculum; and the development of tolerance, cooperation and leadership (p. 11).

It was not until 1999, though, that outdoor education became part of the formal New Zealand school curriculum.

### 2.2 Outdoor education – the New Zealand context

“The fact that communities all over the country [New Zealand] volunteered their time, effort and money to establish and maintain lodges, campsites and centres underlines the value they placed on outdoor education for their children.”

(Lynch, 2006, p. 141)

The term outdoor education is widely used throughout New Zealand schools, and as discussed in the previous section, it is a broad term that can encompass a myriad of educational opportunities. The use of the term is not limited to schools, however. Tertiary institutions and other organisations have also been, and continue to be, involved in the development of outdoor education practice in New Zealand. This section discusses outdoor education specifically within the context of New Zealand schools.

In an attempt to capture the diversity of what could be considered outdoor education and alleviate some of the confusion surrounding definitions, during the 1970s the then Director General of Education, W.L Renwick, created the term ‘Education Outside the Classroom’ (EOTC) (Lynch, 2006). Today, EOTC is defined as…

…a generic term used….to describe curriculum-based learning that extends beyond the four walls of the classroom. This ranges from a marae visit to a sports trip, outdoor education camp or a rocky shore field trip. The term ‘outdoor education’ is widely used to refer to adventure education and outdoor pursuits (Haddock, 2007, p. 4).

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7 Lynch’s (2006) Camping in the curriculum: A history of outdoor education in New Zealand schools provides detailed coverage of tertiary institutions’ and other organisations’ contribution to outdoor education.
Thus, EOTC opportunities can be utilised to meet requirements throughout the curriculum. In the formal New Zealand school curriculum, however, outdoor education was introduced as one of the seven key areas of learning associated with the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum 1999* (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Owing to its inclusion in the formal school curriculum, outdoor education is compulsory for all students up until the end of Year 10. Although compulsory, the diversity of activities that are considered part of the outdoor education ‘package’ means that the way outdoor education is implemented and practiced in individual schools is equally diverse. Despite this diversity, researchers have argued that placing outdoor education within the context of physical education has limited what is meant by outdoor education and has “denied the full nature of the outdoor educational processes” (Boyes, 2000, p. 75). That is, there is an emphasis on adventurous, outdoor pursuits (Zink, 2005). This is also reflected in the EOTC definition given above: “The term ‘outdoor education’ is widely used to refer to adventure education and outdoor pursuits” (p. 4). The description of outdoor education included in the curriculum document also reinforces this emphasis on adventurous activities.

Outdoor education includes adventure activities and outdoor pursuits. Adventure activities foster students’ personal and social development through experiences involving co-operation, trust, problem solving, decision making, goal setting, communication, leadership, responsibility, and reflection. Through outdoor pursuits, students develop particular skills and attitudes in a range of outdoor settings. Outdoor pursuits include biking, orienteering, bush walking, tramping, camping, kayaking, sailing, following rope trails and rock climbing (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46).  

The practice of outdoor education in New Zealand schools appears to differ between primary and secondary schools (Lynch, 2006). While the outdoors is utilised to deliver educational opportunities to pupils across the curriculum, a recent survey investigating the nature and scope of outdoor education in New Zealand schools suggests that primary schools place a greater focus on outdoor education as curriculum enrichment and utilise non-pursuit based...  

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8 The researcher is aware that in November 2007 a new curriculum was released for New Zealand schools. This new curriculum retains outdoor education as one of the seven key areas of learning associated with *Health and Physical Education*. However, a replacement document to the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum 1999* has not been released. In addition, schools have until 2010 to implement the new curriculum in a way that is relevant to each specific school community. In light of this, the definition contained in the 1999 document is used in this thesis.
activities more than secondary schools (Zink & Boyes, 2006). In secondary schools, though, 45% of outdoor programmes were residential and the majority occurred outside of school time. Outdoor education exists as subject-specific field trips (for example biology, economics, geography, history and maths), programmes delivered at outdoor centres and as an elective subject at the senior Year levels (11-13) (Zink & Boyes, 2006). Due to the low response rate to the survey, which Zink and Boyes conducted, and the self-selection process used, these results cannot be inferred as being representative of how outdoor education is practiced in all New Zealand schools. Nevertheless, it does give an indication as to the ways outdoor education is currently being practiced in New Zealand by some schools.

The practice of outdoor education in New Zealand schools is guided by the underlying purpose of outdoor education presented in the Health and Physical Education curriculum document which states that “[o]utdoor education provides students with opportunities to develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe, and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the environment” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46). This statement includes aspects of understanding self, others and the environment and is consistent with the definition of outdoor education used in this thesis (see Section 2.1). When this purpose is viewed alongside the description of outdoor education in the curriculum document given above, adventure activities are the vehicle through which a greater understanding of self, others and the environment is promoted. Despite this three-fold purpose, the survey mentioned above found a predominance of personal (understandings of self) and social (understandings of others) outcomes. Respondents ranked, in order of importance, the following learning outcomes: group co-operation (social); improved self-esteem (personal); consideration of others (social); safety knowledge; increased self-responsibility (personal); and social and communication skills (social) (Zink & Boyes, 2006).

In achieving these broader educational aims of personal and social development, the ‘school camping’ initiatives of the 1950s were identified by Lynch (2006) as the first activities in New Zealand’s education history to be described as outdoor education. Although camping and outdoor activities were already being practiced in an ad hoc manner throughout New Zealand, the defining characteristic of the school-based outdoor activities of the 1950s that marked them as ‘outdoor education’ was that during this period they were held with increasing frequency during school time, rather than outside school time. This change signalled an increasing acceptance of the educational benefit of the ‘school camping’ phenomenon, as school time could only be used for activities that were relevant to the formal school
curriculum. (Lynch, 2006). Today, many New Zealand school children have the opportunity to participate in an outdoor education experience that is still known as ‘school camp’.

As the primary subject of this thesis, the following section will briefly trace the development of ‘school camping’ in New Zealand.

2.3 A short history of ‘school camping’ in New Zealand

The most comprehensive history of the development of outdoor education in New Zealand is provided by Pip Lynch’s *Camping in the curriculum: A history of outdoor education in New Zealand schools* (2006). In her work, Lynch identified and discussed key social, political and economic factors that contributed to and influenced the way outdoor education developed in New Zealand, primarily through the ‘school camping’ initiatives introduced during the 20th Century. Outdoor education developed in New Zealand schools because of an education system that adopted a more progressive ideology (Lynch, 2003, 2006). This was instigated by the educational reforms of the 1930s. These reforms were similar to those in both Europe and the United States, and essentially involved a movement that challenged traditional education practice by becoming a more “democratic, child centred and experience-driven system” (Lynch, 2006, p. 18). Lynch identified this ideological change as being the catalyst that facilitated the growth of outdoor education in New Zealand.

Prior to the 1930s, the outdoors was used to educate children, but outdoor opportunities were localised, relied on the enthusiasm and interest of school staff, and were usually held for boys (Lynch, 2006). The term ‘school camp’ was being used in *Education Gazette* articles from the late 1930s and the first recorded ‘school camp’ was held by Auckland Normal School during the first two weeks of the 1938 school year. It was largely recreational in nature. It was not until 1949, however, that a ‘school camp’ first received approval from the Department of Education (Lynch, 2003, 2006; Stothart, 1993). This camp was held in Taranaki during the school holidays and became known as “the original school camping ‘experiment’” as it was a school activity for school purposes (Lynch, 2006, p. 78). Then, in 1952, the “first true outdoor education camp” took place (Lynch, 2006, p. 79). Dudley Wills (Superintendent of Physical Education 1949-1971) organised this ten-day, boys only, camp. It was more educational in nature than the previous camps as it drew on the social studies curriculum and included visits

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9 The *Education Gazette* is the official magazine of the body governing education in New Zealand. Currently, this body is called the Ministry of Education and previously it was known as the Department of Education.

10 The *Department of Education* was replaced by the *Ministry of Education* in 1989.
Part A: Literature Review

to factories, power projects, farms, thermal areas and forestry projects (Lynch, 2006; Stothart, 1993). As school camping became more prevalent throughout the 1950s, most camps involved primary school pupils.

The inception of these activities gave rise to regular use of the term ‘school camp’ and was a term…

…deliberately used to refer to a particular type of activity. ‘School camps’ were unlike the previous trips and camps undertaken by pupils and teachers in New Zealand schools in that they were considered to be an integral part of the school programme. The amalgamation of political and educational changes and official encouragement to experiment with curriculum innovations facilitated the uptake of the ‘school camp’ concept in primary schools’ (Lynch, 2006, p. 59).

Despite the adoption of school camping, outdoor initiatives received little specific and secured funding from education authorities prior to 1999, therefore, its presence in New Zealand schools needed to be continually justified (Lynch, 2006).

2.3.1 The purpose of and need for ‘school camping’

Over time, the purpose of ‘school camping’ (and other outdoor experiences that are now broadly termed outdoor education) varied with changes in the wider New Zealand social, political and economic context. In the early years, the outdoors was primarily seen as a way to improve children’s physical and mental health and to enrich aspects of the curriculum such as nature study. Later, with the threat of war, the major focus of educational outdoor activities shifted towards physical activity. Then, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, social issues such as adolescent delinquency became a concern. Outdoor recreation was considered a respectable and worthwhile use of time, so outdoor activities were further introduced into schools in an attempt to make schooling more attractive to young people and to curb socially unacceptable behaviour (Lynch, 2006). Whatever the reason, Lynch noted that there seems to be one enduring and underlying purpose for the inclusion of outdoor activities in New Zealand children’s education: personal and social development.

This personal and social development theme was evident during the 1930s and 1940s, and is encapsulated in the following quote from a 1939 Education Gazette article entitled ‘School Camp’. “Children learn to live together, to keep themselves clean and healthy; it teaches them to love nature and the open country. It gives the teacher the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with the child” (cited in Lynch, 2006, pp. 61-62). Similarly, the instigator of a 1942 camp (P.A. Smithells) said the following: “[The camp had been] very happy and
profitable with the greatest value being the closer personal contacts made between children and their teachers” (Smithells, 1942; cited in Lynch, 2006, p. 64). As discussed above, this social and personal development theme is retained in the present day Health and Physical Education document, of which outdoor education is part.

The outdoor education developments in New Zealand were influenced by similar developments in other Western countries, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States of America. As outdoor education opportunities increased and resources were allocated, practitioners faced increasing pressure to justify the ‘effectiveness’ of their programmes; this led to an increase in academic endeavour to investigate the outcomes of outdoor and adventure programmes. The following section will review the relevant outdoor and adventure education research literature to date.

2.4 Approaches to researching outdoor education

Concerted research effort in the outdoor and adventure education field began in the 1950s. Since that time, there has been a focus on quantitative methodologies that focus on changes in psychological outcomes, such as self-concept (Ewert, 1987). Although Ewert’s observation was made 20 years ago, repeated calls from researchers to diversify methods used to investigate outdoor programmes suggest that the situation remains largely unchanged (Barrett & Greenaway, 1995; Davidson, 2001; Martin & Leberman, 2005; Warner, 1990). Researchers have suggested that the use of quantitative approaches stems from the need for practitioners to quantify outdoor education outcomes in order to justify the financial resources allocated to programmes (Davidson, 2001; Martin & Leberman, 2005). The dominance of psychological outcome studies could also be attributed to the theoretical emphasis on prescribed personal and social outcomes and, as such, research has sought to confirm the purposes for which outdoor programmes have been designed.

2.4.1 A focus on psychological outcomes

From a theoretical perspective, the outcomes of an outdoor programme can be categorised into three groups. These are “cognitive (e.g., fact acquisition), physical (e.g., technical skill development), or affective (i.e., emotional or social development)” (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 19). It is this third outcome that is commonly termed personal and social development in the outdoor education literature. Priest and Gass (2005) use the terms intrapersonal outcomes (personal development) and interpersonal outcomes (social development). Intrapersonal outcomes include new confidence in oneself, increased willingness to take risks, improved self-concept, and enhanced leadership, increased logical reasoning and greater reflective
thinking. Interpersonal outcomes include enhanced cooperation, more effective communication skills, greater trust in others, increased sharing of decision-making, new ways to resolve conflicts, improved problem solving, and enhanced leadership. This theoretical emphasis on personal and social development seems to have guided much of the empirical research in the outdoor education field with an emphasis on consequences: the effects which outdoor programmes have on participants in terms of a wide variety of potential benefits.

Studies have reported that outdoor programmes have positive effects on participant self-concept (McLeod & Allen-Craig, 2007; West & Crompton, 2001), self-esteem (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Seilgmann, 1997; Wang, Liu & Kahlid, 2006), self-confidence and self-acceptance (Anderson et al., 1997). Other studies have focused on locus of control. These studies have found that participation in an outdoor course significantly increases participants’ internal locus of control orientation (Luckner, 1989; Newberry & Lindsay (Jr.), 2000). A specific instrument for measuring psychometric outcomes in an outdoor education context has also been developed: The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ). The LEQ was developed in response to a need for a “theoretically and psychometrically sound instrument” to assess changes in the self-concept of outdoor programme participants (Neill, Marsh, & Richards, 2003, p. 2). Studies utilising this instrument report positive effects for participants’ Life Effectiveness (McLeod & Allen-Craig, 2007; Neill, 1999; Purdie, Neill, & Richards, 2002).

Social outcomes have also been reported. Studies have found increases in social abilities (McAvoy, Smith, & Rynders, 2006; Wang et al., 2006) and increased tolerance for others (Anderson et al., 1997; Sable, 1995; Schleien, Krotee, Mustonen, Kelterborn, & Schermer, 1987). Other studies have found that outdoor adventure programmes reduce recidivism rates in At-Risk Youth (West & Crompton, 2001).

One characteristic of this quantitative, outcome-focused adventure education literature is the lack of a consistent research approach (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997). As a result, the literature is widely variable and has been described as “piecemeal attempts to look at outcomes, usually involving one-off studies using before-and-after comparisons with small samples and ignoring interesting independent variables such as length, instructor experience, and differences between programs” (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 46). This variability has made it difficult to summarise and synthesise the major findings (Neill, 2002). One way researchers...
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have attempted to synthesise the plethora of quantitative adventure or outdoor education studies is through meta-analysis.

2.4.2 Meta-analyses

Five meta-analyses of the adventure education literature have been conducted (Neill, 2002), three of which were obtained for review in this study. These were Cason and Gillis (1994), Hattie et al. (1997) and Hans (2000).

The three meta-analyses reviewed here synthesise the psychometric, outcome-based adventure education research and provide critical evaluation of these studies. All three meta-analyses found small-moderate average effect sizes (Hattie et al. 0.34; Cason and Gillis, 0.31; Hans, 0.38). These effect sizes indicate that participants experienced positive increases in the programme benefits under investigation in the studies. These effect sizes are similar to those recorded for achievement and affective outcomes from other educational interventions (Hattie et al., 1997). Furthermore, the outcomes from adventure programmes seem to be enduring over time (Hattie et al., 1997). Thus, all three studies found support for claims that adventure education programmes are beneficial for participants. Despite these positive conclusions, the authors of these meta-analyses made four criticisms of this body of quantitative studies. First, that there is much variability in the outcomes reported in adventure education studies (Neill, 2002). The analysis conducted by Hattie et al. (1997), for example, revealed 40 different outcome categories (96 studies). Similarly, in Cason and Gillis’ (1994) earlier study, 19 outcome measures were found (43 studies). Second, the quality of the available research has also been criticised (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hans, 2000; Hattie et al., 1997). Third, it is claimed that adventure education research is lacking in descriptive detail of the specific programmes under investigation (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hans, 2000; Hattie et al., 1997; Neill, 2002). What this means is that it is difficult to compare studies and draw conclusions regarding the process variables and how they contribute to the reported outcomes (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997). A fourth reason is that issues surrounding the suitability of quantitative research for the adventure/outdoor education field have been raised (West &

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11 It is not considered critical, however, that the other two (Marsh, 1999; Bunting & Donley, 2002) were not acquired as both analyses were smaller and focused on a specific part of the adventure education literature. Marsh’s (1999) analysis only included American camping programmes (22 studies) and Bunting and Donley (2002) only included 15 studies investigating challenge ropes course programmes. In comparison, Hattie et al. (1997) included 96 studies and Cason and Gillis (1994) included 43 studies. They were, consequently, more comprehensive in their approach. Hans (2002) analysed just 24 studies investigating locus of control, but was easily locatable (J. T. Neill, 2002).
Crompton, 2001) because researchers have questioned whether or not quantitative instruments are sensitive enough to identify qualitative changes that might occur during adventure programming (Cason & Gillis, 1994). In light of this, researchers have advocated for use of more qualitative, narrative, approaches when investigating adventure and outdoor education (see, for example, Barrett & Greenaway, 1995; Davidson, 2001; McKenzie, 2000). Thus, there is much scope for further research that investigates the ways in which participants experience adventure and outdoor education programmes. If conducted qualitatively, these studies would usefully complement the quantitative literature.

The need for empirical work investigating other aspects of outdoor and adventure education, rather than simply measuring outcomes, has been recognised for some time (see Ewert, 1987). In response, researchers have recently begun to consider the ways in which outdoor programmes contribute to the reported outcomes; that is, the processes of outdoor education.

2.4.3 The processes of outdoor education
Several studies have investigated outdoor education processes – the how – rather than simply the outcomes of such programmes. Work in this area is still associated with learning and outcomes, though. Typically, these studies seek to identify the components or aspects of adventure programmes that achieve certain programme outcomes. This section will discuss the research that has been conducted to better understand the ways in which outdoor education outcomes are achieved, beginning with the ‘Outward Bound Process’ model developed by Walsh and Golins (Walsh & Golins, 1976).

From a theoretical perspective, the process of outdoor programmes includes the following aspects: a learner; a physically and socially unfamiliar learning environment; problem solving tasks; adaptive dissonance; mastery of learning; and the reorganisation of the meaning and direction of learners’ experience (Walsh & Golins, 1976). Although this model was developed specifically within the context of Outward Bound over 30 years ago, it remains a popular model within outdoor and adventure education literature. Despite its popularity, the model has received little empirical research attention. McKenzie (2003) and Sibthorp (2003) are two exceptions, however.

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12 Outward Bound schools are located in 40 different countries, all originating from the original Outward Bound School founded by Kurt Hahn in 1941 at Aberdovey, Wales. Today, Outward Bound schools are internationally recognised providers of experiential outdoor education programmes.
Using Walsh and Golin’s model as a foundation, McKenzie (2003) sought to identify the ways in which Outward Bound outcomes were achieved. In doing so, she proposed an alternative model of student learning (see Figure 1, p. 21) concluding that the aspects of an Outward Bound course that influence course outcomes are the course activities, the physical environment, instructors, the group and students’ personal characteristics. Four of these aspects (with the exception of instructors) also appear in Walsh and Golin’s original model, but instead of being linked sequentially, McKenzie’s model links each aspect directly with reflection and learning. Both the original and alternative models of student learning were created and tested within an Outward Bound programme context. Therefore, this model still warrants testing in other outdoor programme contexts.

**Material removed for copyright compliance.**

**The alternative model of student learning proposed by McKenzie can be accessed from:**


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**Figure 1: An alternative<sup>13</sup> model of student learning (McKenzie, 2003)**

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<sup>13</sup>For the original model, see Walsh and Golins (1976). Priest and Gass (2005) also include a description of the original model.
Another method that has been applied to better understand the components or attributes of an outdoor programme and how they contribute to course outcomes is a marketing methodology called Means-End Analysis (Goldenberg, McAvoy, & Klenosky, 2005; Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary, & Templin, 2000). Both studies by Goldenberg et al. (2005; 2000) used a survey containing open-ended questions to gather data concerning the outcomes participants believed they had received from participating in a ropes (2000) or Outward Bound (2005) course. The second Goldenberg et al. (2005) study found that the outcomes listed most frequently by participants were relationships with others/teamwork, knowledge/awareness, personal growth/challenges and determination/perseverance. The attributes of the programme that participants said contributed to these outcomes were the course overall, interactions, rock climbing, expeditioning, campcraft and the solo experience. These results suggest that according to participants, specific elements of a course programme contribute to particular outcomes considered important by participants.

The strength of these studies is that the open-ended nature of the survey allowed participants to articulate the outcomes of their outdoor experiences in their own words, rather than constraining them to a researcher constructed, close-ended, questionnaire. While these studies do enhance understanding of how outdoor courses may work, a desire to understand outcomes and not student experience seems to underpin them. These studies do not address ‘what is experience?’ It is possible that, from the participant’s perspective, outcomes are not a high priority in terms of the overall outdoor education experience, or that they might consider important different outcomes. In addition, there may be discrepancies between how outdoor practitioners value outdoor programmes and how programme participants value them.

Discrepancies between the ways in which participants and outdoor education experts value outdoor education programmes have been suggested by one study, in particular. Witman (1995) found that adolescents seemed to value characteristics of adventure programmes relating to ‘processes’ more highly than the programme providers who valued ‘content’ characteristics. In Witman’s study, participants ranked ‘helping/assisting others’ as the most important aspect of their adventure programmes, while the practitioners ranked it eighth. Similarly, ‘being playful/having fun’ was ranked eighth by participants and first by practitioners. What must be remembered, however, is that the programme characteristics used

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14 A ropes course (also known as high ropes courses) is an activity which consists of a series of high and/or low rope activities designed to challenge individuals or groups. Challenges might be physical and/or emotional. Courses can be designed to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, teamwork, trust, problem solving skills, etc.
in this study were determined by adult practitioners providing outdoor education programmes, so participants were constrained to respond to a predetermined list. It is possible that had the study been more open-ended, participants might have identified different or additional aspects of the programmes.

Given the focus on confirming the efficacy of outdoor programmes through quantitative outcome studies, most research seems to be primarily researcher-driven. The previously mentioned quantitative studies appear to explore what Zink (2005) articulates as being “what should or ought to happen” in outdoor education programmes, rather than “what is” outdoor education (p. 19). Similarly, McKenzie (2003) pondered whether Outward Bound courses (the subject of her research) were working in the ways outdoor professionals intended. In light of these remarks, it seems that there needs to be a concerted research effort to understand the ways participants experience outdoor education. This criticism is not unique to the outdoor and adventure education field. During the late 1990s, the outdoor recreation literature more generally was criticised for its emphasis on the desired and expected outcomes of an outdoor experience. Patterson, Watson, Williams and Roggenbuck (1998) argued that this approach does not allow the actual nature of the experience to be investigated. To anticipate the utility of a qualitative approach to investigate the ways in which students experience outdoor education programmes, such as the one used in this study, the next section discusses the centrality of ‘experience’ to outdoor education and addresses the question: ‘What is ‘experience’?"

2.5 Outdoor education and ‘experience’

“Experience is at the historical heart of outdoor education” (Payne, 2002, p. 4). The centrality of experience to outdoor education is a result of the progressive education ideologies upon which it is founded (see Section 2.3). Supporters of progressive education advocated for a more experience-driven schooling system and this system was often portrayed as being at odds with traditional education practices. This dichotomy was dismissed, however, by John Dewey, the renowned educational theorist, in the conclusion of his work *Experience and Education* (1963).

I do not wish to close, however, without recording my firm belief that the fundamental issue is not new versus old education nor of progressive against traditional education but a question of what anything whatever must be worthy of the name education. …….What we need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be
Thus, one of Dewey’s primary points was that ‘experience’ was not the distinguishing feature separating traditional and progressive theories of education because students receiving traditional education still had experiences; they were just “largely of a wrong kind” (p. 26). To him, then, the key to education was the right kind of experiences. From this premise, outdoor education uses the outdoors to provide effective educative experiences.

It is not simply experience, however, that causes education to occur in the outdoors. Much outdoor education literature (and outdoor/adventure education programmes for that matter) draws on experiential learning theory, which is a key component of outdoor education philosophy (see Section 2.1). Although often used synonymously, experiential learning and outdoor/adventure education are not the same thing. Experiential learning is a process of learning, while adventure education deliberately applies this process within the context of adventure activities with specific educational purposes (Wurdinger, 1997). The experiential learning process is cyclical and includes four phases: experience, reflection, processing and application (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). The fundamental premise of experiential learning, however, is that individuals can only construct meaning from their ‘experiences’ if time for reflection, processing and transference (application) is allowed for (Wurdinger, 1997). For this to be effective, “specific experiences need to be planned and implemented” (Nadler & Luckner, 1992, p. 1). The outcomes of these planned outdoor experiences has dominated the outdoor/adventure education literature, while discussion of what counts as experience has largely been neglected (Zink, 2005).

### 2.5.1 What is experience?

Within the outdoor education field there seems to be little agreement as to what ‘experience’ is and how it might be defined. Despite this vagueness, the word ‘experience’ is routinely and prolifically used throughout the literature. This becomes problematic as researchers (and practitioners) may not have a shared understanding of what ‘experience’ means. Fifteen years ago, Bell (1993) raised this problem as a theoretical issue. However, it seems that with the exception of Payne (2002) and Zink (2004), the notion of ‘experience’ and how it might be defined continues to receive little academic attention within the context of outdoor education. Payne (2002) suggested that this may be because what ‘experience’ is and the meaning of ‘experience’ are implicitly assumed within the field of outdoor education. Certainly, this appears to be the case, given the lack of academic critique associated with the term. This study, however, does not rely on implicit assumptions and because the primary topic of this
thesis is the way in which students experience a school camp, the term ‘experience’ will be defined. To establish what ‘experience’ is in the context of this study, the following discussion will draw on literature from tourism, outdoor recreation, philosophy, psychology and outdoor education.

Vague definitions of ‘experience’ are not limited to the outdoor education literature. Other fields of enquiry (e.g., tourism) also neglect any comprehensive definition of the concept. In the absence of a suitable definition from the outdoor literature, two definitions of experience, one from a psychological dictionary and the other from a philosophical encyclopaedia, will be used to open the discussion.

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy defines experience broadly as “direct observational knowledge of the world” (Handerich, 2005, p. 60), and the APA Dictionary of Psychology defines experience as “1) a conscious event: an event that is lived through, or undergone, as opposed to one that is imagined or thought about” and “2) the present contents of consciousness” (VandenBos, 2007, p. 354). Both these definitions encapsulate experience in the present tense. Within an outdoor education context, Neill’s (2004b) definition is consistent with this understanding that experience is something that is continual. For Neill, “Experience refers to the nature of the events someone or something has undergone. Experience is what is happening to us all the time – as long as we exist…the subjective nature of one’s current existence” (para. 1 & 2). Neill’s definition also incorporates the idea that experience is subjective; that is, two individuals will not experience the same event in exactly the same way: “there is no generic clone for ‘the experience’ which applies to everyone” (Bell, 1993, p. 20).

In an attempt to structure the subjective nature of experience, tourism researchers have developed typologies of experiences. One typology developed was Cohen’s (1996) five “modes of tourist experience” (p. 93) that range along a continuum from pleasurable touristic experiences to more meaningful and authentic ones. Uriely (2002) acknowledged the importance of typologies because, while relatively simplistic, they sensitise “social scientists to the variety of motivations and meanings associated with tourist experiences” (p. 526). He termed this ‘pluralizing the experience’.
Moreover, “experience ‘exists’ through interpretation” (Bell, 1993, p. 20). Interpretations of lived experiences are determined by individuals’ personal characteristics\(^{15}\) (e.g., age, sex, personality, socio-economic status, religious beliefs) and backgrounds or previous experiences. These characteristics and previous experiences create a filter through which individuals perceive and interpret present events. Each of these factors is unique to a given individual and, therefore they can be considered internal. In accordance with this understanding of experience, several outdoor education studies have recognised the influence of personal characteristics on outdoor experiences (McKenzie, 2003; Sibthorp, 2003). In addition, external factors also influence people’s interpretations of events.

External factors relate to the context in which an event occurs. Bell (1993) recognised the contextual nature of experience. That is, the same outdoor programme conducted in two different locations or with different weather conditions will deliver different experiences. Bell’s understanding of experience as contextual is akin to the concept of ‘situated freedom’ used by Patterson et al. (1998) in their study of river journey experiences. Situated freedom is…

…the idea that there is structure in the environment that sets boundaries on what can be perceived or experienced, but that within those boundaries recreationists are free to experience the world in highly individual, unique, and variable ways (Patterson et al., pp. 425-426).

Participants’ experiences of their river journey occurred within a specific context which influenced the type of experiences they might report. The contextual nature of experience has been recognised in some outdoor education studies. Gunn (2006), for example, noted that the time of year, time of day, the weather and outside-of-school experiences all impact upon the inside-school teaching experiences of outdoor education teachers. Similarly, Zink (2005) also recognised this bounding of experience when she ‘considered seriously’ two students’ comments and asked “what it [was] possible to experience in outdoor education” as a result of normalising processes (p. 19, emphasis added). The result of the myriad of internal and external factors influencing people’s experiences is that a single event can be experienced in numerous ways. In the outdoor recreation literature, for example, Patterson et al. (1998) noted that the challenge dimension associated with the river journey played a different role and had a different meaning for different individuals.

\(^{15}\) Sibthorp (2003) uses the term ‘antecedent factors’ to describe these personal characteristics.
A final point relating to the contextual nature of experience is that interpretations (in which experiences exist) of events occur at a particular time. Conceptualising experience as being a continual process means interpretations can change and if interpretation is the way in which experience is known, experience will also change over time (Bell, 1993).

The above discussion has identified four aspects of experience: it is continual and present, it is subjective, it is understood through interpretations, and it is contextual or situated. Two of these aspects, the present and subjective nature of experience, are especially problematic from a research perspective because capturing first-hand accounts of human experience will always take place after the actual (present) experience. Wattchow (2007) acknowledged this aspect of investigating experience when he wrote that the “participants’ recollections of their experiences were dominated by the technical requirements of the activity and the cultural expectations for encountering a wild river” (p. 10) during kayaking trips. From a practical perspective, however, it does not seem realistic (and perhaps not possible) to collect first-hand accounts of human experiences as they occur. Any attempt to gather information from individuals by way of in-depth interviews, focus groups or questionnaires will, by necessity, take place after an event in which time respondents will have had an opportunity to reflect. Although participant observations could occur during an event, this technique does not allow for the subjective nature of experience on the part of participants. Consequently, in a research context, participants’ recollections of the experiences are their experiences. That is, the present experiences of others will always be gathered as past experiences by researchers. For the purposes of this research, then, experience is the recollected, subjective interpretations and perceptions (at a given time) of a given event, in this case, school camp. Having defined ‘experience’ in this way, the discussion will now turn to the potential implications for outdoor education research.

2.5.2 Implications for outdoor education research

Conceptualising experience as subjective interpretations of a given event in a specific context raises issues regarding outdoor education philosophy and the research approaches used to investigate experience. First, it challenges the statement by Nadler and Luckner (1992) quoted above regarding the construction of specific experiences to achieve prescribed outcomes for all participants. Given that each student will bring to the outdoor programme their own past experiences and personal characteristics, the student experience of outdoor programmes could differ from the ‘experience’ these programmes have been designed to deliver. Understanding
experience as the subjective interpretations of individuals could mean that other outcomes and experiences, not anticipated by outdoor educators or researchers, may also be occurring.

If this is the case, the second issue raised by the conceptualisation of experience used in this study is that any approach that is to successfully capture participant experience needs to be open-ended and more participant-driven to allow for the personal nature of experience to emerge. Using a more participant-driven approach can allow participants to talk more freely about their experiences and, therefore, have a greater influence as to what data are collected. In contrast, quantitative methods might limit insight into the full nature of experience (Warner, 1990) because they are largely researcher-driven and restrict participant responses to the particular topic under investigation. Studies using researcher-derived, quantitative instruments, then, will not necessarily capture subtle differences in individuals’ experiences. This in turn hinders insight into the potential influence of outdoor and adventure programmes on participants (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000; Davidson, 2001; Garst, Scheider, & Baker, 2001). Moreover, if programmes are designed to produce personal development outcomes (e.g., self-concept), it seems logical that when tested the relevant outcomes are likely to be present to some degree (Zink, 2003). In sum, then, quantitative research methodologies seem to be inappropriate for investigating participant experience of outdoor programmes. With this recognition, qualitative research methods may be more appropriate when investigating the ways in which students experience outdoor education (Davidson, 2001; Gunn, 2006; Martin & Leberman, 2005) and they may provide an insightful complement to quantitative instrument-based research.

Using qualitative research methods to investigate student experience of outdoor programmes is not a new suggestion. Nearly 20 years ago, Warner (1990) suggested that researchers focus on “documenting the nature of both the individual’s experience and the total program experience through qualitative evaluation and research methods” (p. 313). Then, five years later, Barrett and Greenaway (1995) compiled a review of the outdoor education literature and concluded that…

…there is a desperate need for new research which focuses on young people themselves. Young people’s accounts of their outdoor adventure experiences and their views about what most influenced their learning and development are almost entirely absent from the literature assessed in this review. Yet such information is essential (p. 54).
Qualitative methods are being used more frequently in the outdoor education field and researchers who have adopted a qualitative methodology have found benefit in doing so. Qualitative methods that have been applied to date involve case studies (Davidson, 2001; Haskell, 2000), participant observation (Davidson, 2001; Garst et al., 2001; Gordon & Dodunski, 1999), in-depth interviews (Davidson, 2001; Garst et al., 2001; Quay, Dickinson, & Nettleton, 2002; Stewart, 2006/07), focus groups (Bialeschki, Krehbiel, & Henderson, 2002; Lynch, 2000) and photo-elicitation interviews (Loeffler, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Many of these researchers call for outdoor education researchers to continue using qualitative methods (Bialeschki et al., 2002; Martin & Leberman, 2005) because they provide a “…richness and depth that is often missing from quantitative data alone” (Bialeschki et al., 2002, p. 153).

Some studies have also utilised a mixed-method approach by combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Garst et al., 2001; Gordon & Dodunski, 1999; Martin & Leberman, 2005; Quay et al., 2002). Martin and Leberman’s (2005) study is particularly relevant here because the authors compare the utility of quantitative and qualitative methods and highlight the complementary nature of the two approaches. They conclude…

…the quantitative data demonstrated a medium amount of change consistent with other evaluations of outdoor education programs. The qualitative data, in contrast, has provided additional insight into individual learning experiences, which move beyond numbers on a page, highlighting the value of adventure programs to individuals (pp. 56-57).

In pursuit of exploring the student experience of school camps, then, this study follows a similar qualitative line of enquiry and contributes to the body of literature seeking a more in-depth understanding of outdoor education from the perspective of the student. Such an approach has been termed “capturing student voice” (Stewart, 2006/07, p. 36) and seeing the experience of outdoor education “through their eyes” (Schratz & Steiner-Loffler, 1998).

2.6 Seeing outdoor education programmes through ‘their eyes’ and capturing ‘student voice’

Exploratory qualitative research methods, it has been claimed, are more appropriate for investigating student experience because they can be more effective in eliciting individualised accounts. A small number of studies have already been conducted that begin to address this issue.

The qualitative studies which have been conducted in New Zealand suggest that students make meaning from and value their outdoor education experiences in ways that have not been
previously captured in the quantitative literature. Lynch (2000) found that intermediate-aged students considered important their school camp experience for the contrast it provided with their usual school environment, the unique and different opportunities it afforded them, and the opportunity to widen their peer networks. Then, the three themes identified by Davidson (2001) in her study with Year 13 outdoor education students provide further insight. Students valued their outdoor education classes for ‘the on-going enjoyment of overcoming challenges’, ‘building confidence and mental strength’ and ‘the freedom to choose’. She concluded that each of these contributed to the students’ capacity to achieve ‘positive freedom’; that is, outdoor education experiences enabled students to learn what it means to take responsibility for and determine their lives.

Qualitative studies have also highlighted potential gaps between the intended purposes of outdoor education programmes and how students actually experience them (Stewart, 2006/07). Stewart used semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews to capture the school camp experiences of two individual Year 7 and 8 students. Her study revealed that these students were able to identify specific practical skills that they were learning such as learning to kayak, how to get water out of other people’s boats and about how to identify rocky shore creatures, but that these learning outcomes were different to what their teacher had interpreted. Their teacher felt her students had learnt to recognise their own personal limits, to identify their own and others’ strengths and weaknesses, and build on their classroom work regarding rocky shore creatures. This study suggests that outdoor education experiences could provide myriad learning opportunities that are simply unintended. Some of these opportunities could be beneficial and if appropriately harnessed, used by outdoor practitioners to improve their programmes.

Owing to the subjective nature of experience, participants in outdoor programmes can have a variety of experiences. It seems unlikely, then, that all participants of outdoor programmes have purely positive experiences. Yet, as discussed above, quantitative studies typically investigate the positive benefits accrued from outdoor programmes. Neill (2002) noted that many of these studies have “a clear tendency to uncritically promote the view that outdoor education programs are good things for people” (para. 2). Hattie et al. (1997) also commented that “in searching for articles to include in this review [for their meta analysis] we were struck by the number of research papers that read more like program advertisements than research” (p. 45). Thus, it seems that much of this research is either unable to countenance or neglects potential negative outcomes or experiences. The relatively unstructured (compared with
quantitative studies) nature of qualitative research could potentially illuminate any negative experiences.

The need to investigate negative experiences or outcomes of outdoor programmes has been recognised (Ewert, 1987; Gordon & Dodunski, 1999). However, within the body of qualitative literature, there are few reported examples of negative experiences. Gordon and Dodunski (1999) provide one exception. They found that, for a minority of participants, their peers perceived them less favourably after an outdoor programme than before. It is notable, though, that these researchers conducted a mixed-method study and drew this conclusion solely from the quantitative component and did not present supporting evidence from the qualitative data gathered through participant observations. The reasons for this apparent decrease in favourable perceptions might have been illuminated through the inclusion of qualitative data. Thus, it seems this area would profit from further qualitative study.

While the studies discussed above provide crucial insight into the ways students experience outdoor education and derive meaning from their experiences, it is important to acknowledge their limitations within the context of the present study. Several of the studies involved older students. Tertiary students participated in Gordon and Dodunski’s (1999) study and in the case of Davidson’s (2001) study, the research participants were undertaking outdoor education as an elective subject at Year 13 level. While outdoor education at this level encompasses many of the personal, social and environmental purposes discussed near the beginning of this chapter, it exists as an elective subject and has a vocational emphasis (Lynch, 2006), rendering it different to ‘compulsory’ outdoor education programmes in which younger students participate. The experiences of students who elect to participate in outdoor education programmes could differ from those of younger participants who are required to attend a school camp, for example. The meta-analyses discussed in Section 2.4.2 suggest that different-aged participants experience outdoor education programmes differently because those programmes involving adult-age participants were more effective (in terms of the psychometric outcomes under investigation) than those involving younger participants (Neill, 2003). Thus, a potentially important extension of Davidson’s study would be a qualitative exploration of the ways younger students experience ‘compulsory’ outdoor programmes.

The studies by Stewart (2006/07) and Lynch (2000) also offer important contributions to understanding the school camp experiences of younger students, but both approaches may have limited the diversity of school camp experiences captured: Stewart’s by including too
few respondents and Lynch’s by holding focus groups which may have been dominated and
influenced by particular individuals. While qualitative studies typically involve a smaller
number of participants than quantitative studies, using individual, in-depth interviews with a
larger sample size would be a useful extension of these studies because a wider range of
experiences might be captured.

Researchers have also called for greater diversity in the research approaches used to
investigate outdoor adventure (Ewert, 1987). Another qualitative research technique which
could contribute to seeing outdoor education programmes through ‘students’ eyes’ are photo-
elicitation interviews. To date, the utility of this technique has not been fully explored within
an outdoor context. Loeffler (2004a, 2004b, 2005) adopted this technique to investigate the
outdoor experiences of college-aged students who participated in outdoor programmes. She
categorised the meaning which participants ascribed to their outdoor experiences into
‘spiritual connection with the outdoors’, ‘connections with others through outdoor
experience’ and ‘self-discovery and gaining perspectives through outdoor experience’.
Loeffler (2004a; 2004b) concluded that due to the success of her study in identifying these
meanings, photo-elicitation interviews warrant further application and evaluation within the
context of outdoor experiences.

Loeffler does not include a detailed description of the programmes in which her respondents
participated. The few details that are provided suggest that participants attended a range of
programmes which varied in terms of activity and length, that participation in the programmes
was voluntary, and that the programmes might have been more recreational in nature than
educational. Although Loeffler encourages further use of photo-elicitation interviews in
outdoor contexts, it seems that no further photo-elicitation studies have been conducted in the
outdoor education field. What this means is that to this researcher’s knowledge, the study
reported here is the first to investigate student experience of a school-based outdoor education
programme using photo-elicitation interviews.

The study reported in this thesis uses the photo-elicitation interview technique to explore the
school camp experiences of New Zealand secondary school students participating in a
compulsory outdoor education programme known as school camp. The photo-elicitation
interview technique and the procedures used during data collection for this study will be
discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.
Part A: Literature Review

2.7 Chapter summary
Outdoor experiences have been provided for New Zealand school students throughout the history of formal education in New Zealand. It was not until the 1950s, however, that outdoor education as it is practiced today began to emerge in the form of school camping. Today, outdoor education in New Zealand schools occurs in a variety of forms. One enduring component of outdoor education provision in New Zealand is the ‘school camp’.

The primary stated objective for many outdoor education programmes has traditionally been personal and social development. More recently, outdoor education discourses have paid increasing attention to the ways in which programmes influence human-nature relationships. The effectiveness of outdoor programmes in meeting these purposes has been the focus of the vast majority of outdoor education empirical work to date. These studies have been primarily quantitative and sought to answer the question “Does outdoor education really work?” (Neill & Richards, 1998). This approach has come under increasing criticism because it may not be suitable for capturing the ways in which participants experience outdoor education programmes and it is participant experience that is integral to the philosophy and practice of outdoor education. In light of this, qualitative methodologies have been suggested as being more appropriate for investigating the nature of outdoor experience. Although researchers have begun to conduct qualitative studies, there is still much scope to explore outdoor education programmes from a qualitative perspective.

Consequently, this study adopts a qualitative research technique called the photo-elicitation interviews to investigate the ways in which New Zealand secondary school students experience a school-based outdoor education programme called school camp. Before detailing how this method was implemented in Chapter Four, Chapter Three will discuss the photo-elicitation interview technique from a theoretical perspective.
PART B: METHOD

The previous chapter reviewed the relevant outdoor education literature and reached two central conclusions. First, few studies invite first-hand, participant-driven accounts of outdoor education programmes; and second, qualitative research approaches warrant increased application in the outdoor education field. From these two premises, this part of the thesis explores the research approach used in the current study. The study used a qualitative method called photo-elicitation interviews to investigate the ways in which students experience school camps. Chapter Three discusses the photo-elicitation interview technique from a theoretical perspective, and Chapter Four describes the application of this technique within the context of the present research.
Part B: Method

Chapter Three

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE: PHOTO-ELICITATION INTERVIEWS

“The future of meaningful and “acceptable” research in this area [outdoor adventure] lies in the area of methodological pluralism; that is, the use of a variety of approaches and techniques.”

(Ewert, 1987, p. 22)

This chapter will describe and discuss the photo-elicitation interview technique from a theoretical perspective. Photo-elicitation interviews are part of a wider group of visual research methods used in social science. The chapter begins with a short discussion of visual research methods in general, and a more detailed discussion of the photo-elicitation interview technique as a qualitative approach follows.

3.1 Visual research methods

Tangible images are the medium through which visual research methods illuminate understandings of the social world. Primarily, though, visual research methods have developed and have been utilised within the discipline of anthropology. They were first used to document the lives, physical attributes and cultures of native or indigenous peoples on the part of early colonial researchers (Collier Jr & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2000, 2004; Pink, 2001), and were used primarily to support current theory and authors’ perspectives, rather than to generate new theory and research (Harper, 1994). The publication of the classic Balinese Character in 1942, however, challenged the accepted use of photographs in ethnographic studies. Rather than simply using recorded images to catalogue social and cultural phenomenon, the authors, Bateson and Mead, integrated text and photographs to portray an in-depth interpretation of Balinese culture (Harper, 1994).

Until recently, though, image-based research has not been widely adopted throughout other disciplines (Martin & Martin, 2004). It is, however, becoming a more common approach for data collection in sociological, social psychological and educational studies (Banks, 2001). With the exception of Collier and Collier’s Visual Anthropology: Photography as a research method first published in 1967 (revised 1986), published texts devoted to visual research methods are relatively recent. These include Visual methods in social research (Banks, 2001), Doing visual ethnography: images, media and representation in research (Pink, 2001),

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Seeing is believing?: Approaches to visual research (Pole, 2004), Image-based research (Prosser, 1998) and Handbook of visual analysis (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001).

The above texts document the many different ways social science researchers use visual research methods. The methods vary along a continuum of input by research participants (Collier Jr & Collier, 1986). Some methods, for example, involve the researcher simply photographing or filming social settings with no input from research subjects, while other methods involve research participants directing the researcher as to what to capture on film or by taking the actual images themselves. The current study utilised a visual research method that involved the research participants taking their own photographs and then participating in an individual follow-up interview with the researcher. This technique has been called ‘photovoice’ (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001), ‘photo novella’ (Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, & Cekic, 2001) and ‘reflexive photography’ (Douglas, 1998). Another term, ‘photo-elicitation interviewing’, will be used to describe the technique in this thesis. This term was first used by Collier (1957) and was also adopted by Loeffler (2004a, 2004b, 2005) in her study of outdoor experience (see Chapter Two, Section 2.6).

3.2 The photo-elicitation interview method – a qualitative, in-depth interview approach

Interviewing is one of the most common, yet diverse tools for gathering information about the social world. The photo-elicitation interview method is an adaptation of the traditional in-depth research interview. It uses photos (or other tangible images) to stimulate a conversation between the participant and the researcher (Banks, 2001; Collier Jr & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002). As a type of in-depth interviewing, the characteristics of qualitative, in-depth interviews are relevant to a discussion of photo-elicitation interviewing.

In-depth interviews are particularly useful for obtaining subjective, first-hand accounts of human experience (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990) and, therefore, are suitable to address the research gaps in the outdoor education literature which were identified in the previous chapter. They can range from tightly structured interviews consisting of a series of specific questions, to unstructured interviews in which the discussion is allowed to flow and is largely dictated by the respondents’ responses and experiences (Denzin, 1989; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Minichiello et al., 1990). Owing to the conceptualisation of ‘experience’ as recollected, subjective interpretations of events as discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter Two, Section 2.5), and the exploratory nature
of this study, an unstructured interview approach was most suitable for use in investigating the ways students experience school camps. This unstructured approach also allows the research to be more participant-driven, thereby complementing the more researcher-driven, quantitative studies prevalent in the field.

Photo-elicitation interviews can be applied in such a way to capture the qualities of unstructured, in-depth interviews documented above, but the inclusion of photographs introduces further characteristics that can allow the social world to be understood in different ways (Pole, 2004). Until recently, though, the potential of photo-elicitation as a useful research method has gone largely unrecognised (Carlsson, 2001; Harper, 2000, 2002). Researchers are now beginning to recognise “that photography is a helpful tool to understand the way people experience the world” (Carlsson, 2001, p. 125), and photo-elicitation interviews are being used with increasing frequency in social science research (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Harper, 2000). This study harnessed the usefulness of photo-elicitation interviews to investigate the school camp experiences of New Zealand secondary school students.

The benefits of using photographs in research interviews have been well documented. A commonly reiterated benefit is that the photo-elicitation method can reveal meanings and insights that might have otherwise remained obscured in traditional or more conventional, ‘words-alone’ interviews (Carlsson, 2001; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Collier Jr & Collier, 1986). For example, one respondent in Clark-Ibanez’s (2004) study produced 38 photographs of her kitten. While the photographic content appeared narrow, the images elicited additional information about the life experiences of the respondent. The respondent spoke about how her family had recently moved and she had few friends in her new community; therefore, her kitten was an important source of companionship. In addition, her kitten represented her family’s improved socio-economic situation as they could now afford to keep a pet. In this way, photographs are a type of “cultural map” which are interpreted by the informant (Collier Jr, 1957, p. 846)

The inclusion of photographs can also stimulate and sharpen participants’ memories (Flick, 2006; Loeffler, 2005). As noted by Clark-Ibanez (2004), the use of photographs may lead interviewees to reflect on experiences that were not directly associated with the photographs and unknown to the researcher. From the example described in the above paragraph, the respondent’s photographs of her kitten also elicited historical accounts of other pets the respondent had kept earlier in her life. Harper (2002) extends this argument, claiming that
photo-elicitation not only produces more information, but a different kind of information. This he attributes to the quality of photographs and images that call to mind “deeper elements of human consciousness” (p. 13) that result from the different ways people respond to words or images alone. Collier (1957) discussed differences in the information he obtained during a study in which he compared the data generated from traditional, words-alone interviews and interviews using photographs. His study investigated the acculturation processes of French-Acadian farmers in a predominantly English community.

The quality of the data gleaned from each interview [one with photographs and one without] was excellent, though quite different in character. Each covered the same material, but with different perspective and depth. The photographic interview got considerably more concrete information of the structure and processes of the Morris mill, more emphatic expressions of dislike for certain aspects of this industrial work, and much more specific information on the other workers. The non-photo interviews strayed from the course of the research to include more distantly related associations and data; the informant talked more about himself and much of the interview was semi-autobiographical. In this the two interviews differed, for the [photo-elicitation interview] interview stayed on the track of the picture probes – which no doubt cut down the introspective observations we might have obtained by allowing our informant to choose his way (p. 849).

Although Collier concludes that the photographs may have restricted his informants’ responses, it must be remembered that the researcher, not the participant, produced the photographs used. Had the participant produced the images himself, Collier might have reported alternative differences in the type of information obtained.

Photographs also allow outsiders (e.g., researchers) to gain access to the world of their research participants. This is because the “very act of observing is interpretive” (Harper, 2000, p. 721) and, therefore, subjective. That is, photographs “portray the subjective reality perceived…by the photographer” (Martin & Martin, 2004, p. 19). Photographs are also used to retain present events for recollection in the future (Loeffler, 2004b). In addition, respondents’ photographs allow the researcher to hear about events from which they were absent and see a visual representation (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). In this way, photos can help lead to a shared (at least in part) understanding between researcher and participant (Harper, 2000, 2002). It seems, then, that these qualities of photographs and photo-elicitation interviewing make it an apt method for investigating human experiences because if the photographs used are generated by participants themselves, they are likely to be more meaningful to them and
provide stimuli for narratives. Furthermore, photographs could reveal aspects of participant experience of which the researcher may not have been aware.

It is important to realise, however, that the photographs themselves are not the focus of the photo-elicitation interview method; they are simply a means of communication between the researcher and interviewee and they help provide structure to the interview (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). They are, therefore, simply a “means to an end…for only human response can open the camera’s eye to meaningful use in research” (Collier Jr & Collier, 1986, p. 5). It is the meaning and significance attributed to the image by the participant that is of research interest (Pink, 2001). One further beneficial characteristic of photo-elicitation interviews makes this method particularly apt for generating responses from children and young people in research – the disruption of the traditional power relationships involved in the research process.

3.2.1 Power relationships in the research process
Many social science research texts highlight the fact that the power relationship between researcher and research participants is unequal. For example, researchers can investigate the lives of homeless people in San Francisco, but the homeless cannot in turn investigate the lives of a university vice-chancellor (Harper, 2000). Consideration of the power differential between researchers and respondents is fundamental to any study involving children or young people, for as noted by Fontana and Frey (2005), racism, sexism and ageism are “very real and very oppressive” (p. 697, emphasis added). Several texts address the power issues associated with research involving young people (see, for example, Christensen & James, 2000; Fraser, Lewis, Ding, Kellet, & Robinson, 2004; Lewis, Kellet, Robinson, Fraser, & Ding, 2004). Given the difference in age between research participants and the researcher in this study, power issues are acknowledged and the presence of such issues guided the methods adopted and study design (Robinson, 2004). This research adopts the contemporary view that young people should be active research participants and the choice of a photo-elicitation interview technique in which students produced their own photographic stimuli, reflects this perspective.

Proponents of photo-elicitation interviews do not claim that this method remedies issues of power in research, however (Harper, 2000). Instead, they argue that use of photographs in research disrupts some of the unequal power relationships of more conventional research methods. It has been claimed that disrupting the power relationships inherent in research fosters the narrative accounts given by participants.
various attempts to restructure the interviewee-interviewer relationship so as to empower respondents are designed to encourage them to find and speak in their own ‘voices’. It is not surprising that when the interview situation is opened up in this way, when the balance of power is shifted, respondents are likely to tell ‘stories’. In sum, interviewing practices that empower respondents also produce narrative accounts (Mishler, 1991; cited in Carlsson, 2001, pp. 127-128).

This “opening up” of the interview situation and shifting the balance of power towards the teenage participants in this study was considered to be an important strength of the photo-elicitation interview method that could enhance the engagement of the participants and the camp narratives given. Shifting the balance of power, in particular, enables the research approach to be more participant-driven, and a participant-driven approach is imperative in the pursuit of understanding the school camp experience from the perspective of the student. Moreover, to see the camp experience “through their eyes” (Schratz & Steiner-Loffler, 1998, p. 235), it was important that the photographs used during the interviews were generated by the camp participants themselves. That is, the photographs ‘created’ by the participants, rather than a series of questions or topic areas set by the researcher, determined the content of their interview.

The presence of the photographs in the research setting also disrupts the power dynamics inherent in the research process. Photographs are concrete objects that provide both the participant and researcher with something to focus on and which can therefore reduce some of the awkwardness that may be associated with words-alone interviews (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; John Collier Jr, 1957). Given the difference in age between the researcher and the participants, an approach that resulted in a more equal power relationship and relaxed interview atmosphere was vital. Disruption of the traditional power relationships between the researcher and research participants is, perhaps, one of the reasons why photo-elicitation methods have been used successfully in studies involving children and young people.

### 3.2.2 Photo-elicitation research involving children and young people

Topics studied include inner-city childhood (Clark-Ibanez, 2004), physical activity (Darbyshire et al., 2005), the experiences of Bosnian refugee children in Canada (Berman et al., 2001), perceptions of school or university environments (Damico, 1985; Douglas, 1998), perceptions of the good life (Ziller, 1990), children’s (aged 6-11 years) experiences of public space between home and school (Mitchell, Kearns, & Collins, 2006) and children’s (aged 9-11 years) perceptions of river environments (Tapsell, Tunstall, House, Whomsley, & Macnaghten, 2001; Tunstall, Tapsell, & House, 2004). Some studies, like that of Damico
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(1985), asked participants to take a series of photographs, after which the researchers conducted a content analysis of the photographs produced. Others (Berman et al., 2001; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Darbyshire et al., 2005; Douglas, 1998) have extended the method to photo-elicitation interviews. This proliferation of studies utilising a photo-elicitation interview method in studies of children or young people seems to substantiate claims that it is an ideal method to encourage the participation of children in research (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

Researchers working with children and young people have also used slight adaptations of the photo-elicitation interview technique to engage their participation. In their study of children’s perceptions and experiences of place, space and physical activity, MacDougall, Schiller and Darbyshire\(^{16}\) constructed four open-ended photo-statements. Respondents were asked to complete and match one of their photographs to each statement. The current study combined the use of photo-elicitation interviews and photo-statements.

The photo-elicitation interview method has been used in studies in which it was the only method (see, for example, Damico, 1985; Douglas, 1998; Ziller, 1990) or in studies in which it was part of a mixed-method approach (see, for example, Darbyshire et al., 2005; Mitchell et al., 2006). Researchers have provided respondents with their own cameras (see, for example, Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Damico, 1985; Darbyshire et al., 2005) or researchers have recruited respondents after they have participated in the event under investigation and used personal cameras (see, for example, Loeffler, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Loeffler’s (2004a, 2004b, 2005) choice to recruit respondents post-experience was based on an ethical stance to prevent her research (i.e., students having to take photographs) impacting upon the students’ outdoor experiences. Recruiting in this way, however, introduces other ethical considerations; in particular, it prevents respondents who either do not own a camera or do not take a camera, from participating in photo-elicitation studies. If ‘hard copies’ are required, it also prevents participation on the part of people who do not (for whatever reason) develop their images.

Although Loeffler (2004a; 2004b; 2005) attempted to construct a sample that represented the

\(^{16}\) MacDougall discussed this photo-statement approach during an Access Grid seminar on August 13, 2007. The Access Grid is a virtual, real-time, audio-video conferencing tool that enables people in multiple locations to attend seminars and meetings. A similar presentation to that presented by MacDougall via the Access Grid is available on the Ministry of Youth Development website at http://www.myd.govt.nz/uploads/docs/MacDougall%20Wellington%20Youth%20ministries%20Nov%2007.pdf (Accessed July 17, 2008). Also, Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller (2005) provide further information in their article about the methods used in their study. However, photo-statements are not specifically discussed.
college student population, the potential pool of students from which this sample could be constructed may have been severely limited by the recruitment approach used. In the current study, respondents were provided with their own camera on which to take photographs, in order to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate in the study. Before concluding this chapter, some ethical issues which need to be considered when using photo-elicitation interviews will be raised.

3.3 Ethics

The inclusion of photographs which may include people in the research process requires consideration from an ethical perspective. Few photo-elicitation interview studies, however, discuss the ethical issues associated with the technique. One exception is an article by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) which addresses ethical issues associated with using ‘photovoice’ – one application of photo-elicitation. Although their article was written within an American law context and their project had a community advocacy objective, most of the issues Wang and Redwood-Jones raise are applicable to any discussion of photo-elicitation interviews and should be considered within the context of individual photo-elicitation interview projects.17

As with all research involving human participants, informed consent is integral. Wang and Redwood-Jones’ ‘photovoice’ project involved three types of consent: consent from the participants to participate; consent from participants to use their photographs; consent from subjects that might be represented in the images. In each case, consent from participants’ parents/guardians also should be obtained if participants are minors.

The rationale behind obtaining consent from subjects in participants’ photographs is that other people can attach meaning to an image depicting another person which may not be an accurate representation. It also protects (to an extent) against the taking of incriminating images. In light of this, participants should be briefed on the responsibility that is associated with using cameras in research. Although consent to use participants’ photographs in any presentation of the results might be granted, individual participants should retain ownership and copies of their photographs. They should also be informed as to the ways in which their photographs will be used. Wang and Redwood-Jones also advocate that photographers (i.e., research participants) should receive an honorarium when their photographs are published.

17 Only those issues that are relevant to this application of photo-elicitation interviews are mentioned here. Readers are encouraged to obtain the full article for a more in-depth discussion, particularly regarding ethical issues associated with using photo-elicitation in community advocacy contexts.
Another issue raised by these authors relates to researchers suggesting picture-taking ideas. Although this issue is not unique to photo-elicitation studies, researchers need to be particularly mindful not to influence what participants might photograph in the context of participant-generated photographic studies.

3.4 Chapter summary

The photo-elicitation interview technique is a visual research methodology that uses photographs (or tangible images) as conversation stimuli in an interview context. Implementation of this method as an unstructured, in-depth interview renders it apt for investigating human experience; in this case student experience of school camps.

Photo-elicitation interviews have been used successfully with children and young people; and a recent study of outdoor experience (Loeffler, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) suggests that it is a method worthy of further application when investigating the meaning of outdoor experience. Researchers have found student-generated images to be particularly useful for gaining an understanding of young people’s lives from their perspective (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Schratz & Steiner-Loffler, 1998). Thus, providing respondents with their own cameras on which to take photographs helps to ensure the images are meaningful to them (Clark-Ibanez, 2004) and allows students who do not own cameras to be involved. Generating their own photographs also gives students greater control in the research process.

Using this approach, this study gives ‘voice’ to young people that, until recently, has not often times been done in the outdoor education field. Utilising these principles (unstructured interviews and participant-generated images), the following chapter, Chapter Four, describes the way in which photo-elicitation interviews were implemented in this study.
Chapter Four

PHOTO-ELICITATION INTERVIEWS APPLIED IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL CAMPS

Having introduced the concept of photo-elicitation interviews in the previous chapter, the discussion now moves to describing how this method was implemented in the study reported here. This chapter is organised into four sections: recruitment and selection of participants; research setting; data collection; and data analysis.

4.1 Recruitment and selection of participants

The recruitment and selection of participants, and the data collection for this research, occurred between August and December 2007. Participants in this study were Year 10 (aged 14-15 years old) students attending secondary school in Christchurch, New Zealand. Two schools participated in this research: ‘Pewsey Vale’ and ‘Athens Academy’. Staff members who were integral to the implementation of this study included the teacher in charge of physical education (of which outdoor education was part) and the staff member responsible for Year 10 students. Potential respondents were below the age of 16 years, which is the minimum age considered necessary by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee\(^{18}\) to be able to give voluntary and informed consent, so a parental consent process was implemented. This process was designed and implemented in consultation with the staff at each school.

At both schools, Year 10 students were invited to participate in the study by means of a written letter containing all information about the project. These information sheets were placed in an envelope (with the Lincoln University logo) that was generically addressed “To a Year 10 student and their parents/guardians”. At Pewsey Vale, students were informed of the project and invited to participate at a Year 10 assembly. Following the assembly, envelopes were distributed to the students as they left the assembly hall. In total, 99 invitations were distributed at Pewsey Vale. At Athens Academy, 143 invitations were provided to the school and then distributed by the Year 10 class teachers.

The envelopes also contained an information sheet for the parents/guardians. Both student and parent information sheets contained the same information, but with slight phrasing

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\(^{18}\) This study, along with all documentation, was approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.
differences. A consent form was also included. This was a dual consent process and required both the students and their parent/guardian to sign. The information sheet requested that students return the consent form and questionnaire to the school office within two days. They were informed that return of the consent form on the student’s part would indicate that they were interested in being considered for selection to participate in this project, but that due to financial restrictions, only a limited number of students could be involved. Consequently, return of their consent form did not guarantee participation.

4.1.1 Sample

Owing to resource constraints, only 34 students could be accommodated in the study. In light of this, it was desirable to construct as diverse a sample (according to sex and school) as possible from the group of students who responded to the invitation to participate.

Twelve consent forms were returned from Athens Academy (single-sex, girls’ school), giving a potential\(^{19}\) response rate of 8.4%. Twenty-eight consent forms (12 male and 16 female) were returned from Pewsey Vale students. This equates to a response rate of 28.3%. To retain the highest possible male representation in the sample, all male respondents from Pewsey Vale were selected. Then, to maximise the diversity of camp experiences, all 12 (female) respondents were retained from Athens Academy while six females from Pewsey Vale, identified randomly, were withdrawn from the study. Thus, the final sample consisted of 12 males (Pewsey Vale) and 22 females (10 from Pewsey Vale and 12 from Athens Academy).

Following the selection process, each student was contacted by e-mail to communicate the outcome. The e-mail to selected students contained the details of the project briefings (see Section 4.3) and requested that they reply to the e-mail with suggestions for two times when it would be convenient for them to be interviewed.

4.2 Research setting – the school camps

Evaluation of the effectiveness of outdoor education programmes has been rendered problematic by a lack of detailed description regarding the specific programmes engaged in by research participants (Neill & Richards, 1998). In light of this, a description of the two school camp programmes is provided below. The school camps attended by the respondents in this study were three days in duration, and in order to accommodate all students, both

\(^{19}\) Due to the distribution process used at Athens Academy, it is not known for certain how many students received an invitation to participate in this research. Thus, 8.4% represents the lowest possible response rate.
schools organised two camps during one school week: Monday to Wednesday, then Wednesday to Friday. Both camps were also compulsory for students to attend. (Students required formal school permission not to attend.)

4.2.1 Pewsey Vale

The Pewsey Vale camps were held in a semi-rural location approximately an hour and a half away from Christchurch. Both Pewsey Vale camps were co-educational and approximately 70 students participated in each. At school, the Year 10 students were organised into six class groups; three classes attended each camp. The camp was held at the end of the school year after students had completed their Year 10 examinations. This timing was a deliberate choice by the school staff as the time between the completion of examinations and the end of the school year is often ‘unproductive’ for Year 10 classes. In light of this, running a school camp was considered a beneficial way to use this time.

The camp programme was organised primarily by the teacher in charge of physical education (of which outdoor education is a part); however, staff from the contracted outdoor education centre were responsible for the delivery of the technical activities. Three other school staff and three parent helpers also attended the camps. These adults participated in some of the activities and provided support to the students.

Students stayed in cabin-style accommodation in groups of up to ten. These single-sex accommodation groups were self-chosen by the students when they arrived at the camp. Staff had previously encouraged students to be inclusive and considerate of their peers. School staff and parent helpers organised breakfast and lunch in the communal camp kitchen and hall. Students cooked evening meals outdoors using gas stoves in groups of four or five. A two-stage process was used to form the cooking groups. First, students chose a friend to be in a cooking group and, second, the students’ class teachers grouped student pairs.

Students participated in five centre-based, technical outdoor activities. These were the high ropes course, coasteering\(^{20}\), kayaking, abseiling and orienteering. These activities were approximately two hours in duration and took place in early morning and early afternoon. Using a self-report questionnaire, school staff streamed the activity groups in terms of student

\(^{20}\) Coasteering is an expedition type activity along the coastline. It involves participants wearing wetsuits, personal floatation devices and helmets. Participants climb over rocks, jump off rocks and swim around the coastal environment.
ability. The questionnaire required students to rate themselves on a variety of different characteristics, which included perceived physical ability, confidence and willingness to give new things ‘a go’. Each group consisted of 14-16 students. When students were not participating in the technical activities, other informal activities were organised by school staff and students. These included inter-class competitions and games, and Christian devotions. “Free-time” was also scheduled into the camp programme, during which students were able to occupy themselves.

According to the physical education teacher in charge of organising the camp, the purpose of the camp, from the school’s perspective, was three-fold.

1. For the students to challenge themselves and to put themselves outside of their comfort zones (primarily through the technical activities).
2. For the students to get to know other Year 10 students, outside of their class group. (This is because when the students enter senior school the following year, they will be taking classes involving other students with whom they may not have interacted.)
3. For the students to have fun.

4.2.2 Athens Academy

The Athens Academy camps were held in a remote, wilderness location approximately three hours away from Christchurch. Approximately 70 girls participated in each camp. At Athens Academy, students were organised into six class groups and three classes attended each camp. The Athens Academy camps were held at the end of the fourth school term as a result of a change to the New Zealand school year. The camp was originally scheduled for April, but after a change from a three-term to a four-term school year, the Athens Academy’s camp week coincided with the new April school holiday period. The school originally opted for one week in October, but this week was unsuitable as October is a busy month for the school and finding staff members to supervise proved difficult. Consequently, the second to last week of the school year was the next option and this worked well for the school.

The camp was organised primarily by the teacher in charge of outdoor education (part of physical education) who liaised with the contracted outdoor education centre regarding the camp programme. Several staff members who teach the Year 10 students attended each camp. They participated in activities and provided support to the students. The girls stayed in two types of accommodation at camp. One night was spent in dormitory-style accommodation at the outdoor education centre lodge and one night was spent at a
nearby campsite in tents. With the exception of the evening meal and breakfast at the campsite, volunteer helpers (organised by the school) cooked meals in the lodge kitchen. The campsite meals were organised and prepared by the girls in small groups of four or five. These camping groups had been organised by school staff.

The technical activities in which the girls participated were river crossing, a high and low ropes course, navigation, bush walking and the ‘mud run’ and ‘outcamp’. Three form-class groups attended each camp. Each class was divided into two groups of 10-12 girls. Each group was allocated an instructor who facilitated their entire camp experience, which meant that girls participated in all camp activities with their class peers. The exception was one evening which the school staff themselves facilitated at the camp lodge. During this evening, the girls participated in ‘solo’ experience, which involved them spending a short period alone in the bush.

For the school, the overall purpose of the camp was to help meet the requirements of the Health and Physical Education curriculum and to provide the girls with “a series of adventurous activities which will promote and develop their self-reliance, self-confidence, determination, initiative and calculated risk taking.” The physical education teacher described the objectives of the camp in the following way:

1. For the girls to develop independence and self-reliance
2. For the girls to learn some basic bushcraft and outdoor skills
3. For the girls to have fun

In the weeks prior to camp, Athens Academy students were given formal preparation for their camp experience during their physical education classes. This preparation included basic

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21 During ‘navigation’ the girls were taught how to use a compass and then completed several practical activities. The final activity required students to follow a compass bearing through untracked bush.
22 The ‘mud run’ was an activity that involved students undertaking a short bush walk (an hour and a half). During the walk, students cross swampy terrain where there is also a large area of mud, students are encouraged to jump in and play in the mud, before returning to base camp via the river.
23 ‘Outcamp’ was an activity which involved students tramping with a pack for half an hour to a campsite, setting up camp, cooking their own meals (in small groups) and sleeping in tents. The following morning they walked back to base camp.
24 Quote taken from the letter sent home to parents/guardians of Athens Academy students regarding school camp. This quote has been adapted from the Adventure Philosophy team (Accessed March, 20, 2008) http://www.adventurephilosophy.com/top-level-adventure-philosophy/our-philosophy/
Part B: Method

Instruction in tent pitching, using gas stoves and menu preparation. They also completed a workbook of activities that required them to research leadership styles, the contents of survival and first aid kits, how to obtain a weather forecast and permission to cross private land, and where to access information about back-country areas and facilities. They also discussed and role-played outdoor scenarios such as getting lost, dealing with a lost group member, having an injured group member and using a helicopter.

4.2.3 School camp summary

Table 1 (below) summarises the notable similarities and differences between the two camps.

Table 1: Summary of the two school camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Pewsey Vale</th>
<th>Athens Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants – age</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Single sex - females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp duration</td>
<td>Three days, two nights – compulsory attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of year</td>
<td>End of Term Four</td>
<td>Teacher in charge of outdoor education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall camp organisation</td>
<td>Independent outdoor education centres</td>
<td>Independent outdoor education centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants – sex</td>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>Single sex - females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp location</td>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>Remote, wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp programme</td>
<td>Students participated in technical activities in two-hour session blocks. Between activities, students were able to interact with their entire camp group (~ 70 students).</td>
<td>Students spent the majority of their time at camp in their activity groups. Both groups from the same form class participated in the overnight camp together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>High ropes, abseiling, kayaking, coasteering and orienteering.</td>
<td>High/low ropes, navigation, river crossing, bushwalk/mud run and outcamp (overnight camping).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of activity groups</td>
<td>Activity groups were streamed according to student perceptions of their own abilities (14-16 students).</td>
<td>Students were grouped according to their form classes. Each group comprised of half a form class (10-12 students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Two nights in cabins</td>
<td>One night in lodge dormitories, one night in tents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors</td>
<td>Each activity group had a different instructor for each activity.</td>
<td>Each group had the same instructor for the duration of their camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers organised some activities (non-technical) throughout the duration of the camp.</td>
<td>Teachers organised activities one evening, including the solo activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Mobile reception</td>
<td>No mobile reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No formal preparation at school</td>
<td>Formal preparation in physical education classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Data collection

The data collection phase of the study occurred in three stages. First, project briefings with the students were held; second, cameras were distributed then collected; and third, photo-elicitation interviews were conducted. The researcher also visited the first school camp of each school for a single observation day.

4.3.1 Project briefings with students

Project briefings with the students were held at each school during the week prior to each camp. These meetings were organised with the co-operation of the contact staff member at each school. During the briefings, the project was explained and the students were informed about the photo-elicitation process. No specific direction regarding what students might take photographs of was given. This was done to ensure that the participants, as much as possible, drove their own responses. They were, however, encouraged to consider what they might take photographs of and to consider ‘pacing’ their photographs, so as not to miss something important that might happen later in the camp. It was also emphasised that, beyond their taking some photographs at camp that could be used in the subsequent interview, there were no expectations as to what sort of photographs would be produced by students.

This lack of direction and expectation was potentially quite confusing, in as much as it was different from the prescribed and adult-directed work which students are usually required to complete as part of their formal education. Thus, owing to the open-ended nature of the project, participants were provided with the following hypothetical scenario to help them understand what they were to do.

Pretend you are going to post the series of photographs you take on your personal webpage (for example, Bebo, MySpace or Facebook), so you can show your friends what your time at Year 10 camp was like for you. I am interested in what school camp was like from your point of view. These photographs may be of anything, as long as they show something about what school camp is like for you (adapted from Damico, 1985).

At the briefing, each student received these written instructions, the researcher’s contact information and a brief description of what the interview involved.

During the briefing, associated ethical concerns regarding the responsibility acquired by taking a camera to camp, and the appropriate use of the camera, were addressed (see Chapter Three, Section 3.4). The central principle discussed with students was that they should only take photographs of other people if they, the photographer, would be comfortable to be
similarly photographed. Technical use and care of the cameras was also explained. The
_cameras used by participants in this study were 27-exposure, disposable cameras with built-in
flash. Prior to the student briefings, a single exposure was taken on each camera to ensure that
it was working correctly.

Students were then asked to choose a pseudonym by which they wanted to be known in the
presentation of the results; they wrote this name on a piece of paper and photographed it.
There were two reasons for undertaking this process. First, it allowed participants to practice
using their camera and second, it enabled the subsequent photographs to be matched to the
correct participant. Pseudonyms were recorded and the researcher collected the cameras at the
conclusion of the briefings. The cameras were collected to ensure that students did not use up
the film in their cameras before camp.

**4.3.2 Distribution and collection of cameras**

Students’ cameras were re-distributed in a zip-lock, plastic bag on the morning of their camp
departure. They were also provided with another copy of the hypothetical scenario (see
Section 4.3.1). Upon their return from camp, cameras were collected to be taken away for
processing. Photo processing was conducted at a local store that has a low-cost photo
processing outlet. One set of hardcopy prints, the film negatives and digital images (on CD)
were obtained. Students were given all three formats of their photographs to keep. Before
each student’s interview, a digital copy was taken of each image so it could be used during
data analysis and in subsequent presentation of the results.

**4.3.3 Interviews**

Photo-elicitation interviews were conducted in the two weeks immediately following each
school camp (November 29th – December 17th, 2007). Thus, the time delay between the
student returning from camp and participating in their interview was between one and fifteen
days.

Interviews were organised by the participant, their parents/guardians and the researcher at a
time and place that was convenient for the participant. With the exception of one, all
interviews were conducted at the participants’ schools. These occurred before school, during
lunchtimes or after school. At Pewsey Vale, interviews were held in a vacant staff office and
at Athens Academy they were held in the library. One participant opted for their interview to
be held at their home. Each student’s photographs were brought to the interview. To minimise
any preconceived ideas forming, the researcher had not looked at the photographs before the interview. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

In accordance with the unstructured photo-elicitation interview technique outlined in Chapter Three, the researcher did not construct an interview schedule relating to the first research objective – to investigate how students experience a school camp experience. Instead, each participant’s photographs determined the starting point and content of the interview. The researcher also used traditional interviewing skills such as listening carefully to students’ accounts and prompting students to expand on the narratives they were providing. There was one exception, though. To compare the adult-intended purposes of school camp with student perceptions regarding the purpose of camp, near the end of each interview the researcher asked respondents “What do you think was the purpose of school camp?” To address the second objective – to evaluate the use of photo-elicitation interviews – a short interview schedule was developed (Appendix 1).

The interviews were organised into three stages. During the first stage, students viewed their photographs and were encouraged to spend a few minutes looking at them. This was the first time participants had seen their photographs. The second stage involved spreading the photographs out on a desk. At this point, students were given the opportunity to remove any photographs that they had neither taken nor requested be taken. In accordance with accepted photo-elicitation interview practices, this stage was unstructured and involved a simple discussion of the photographs. Collier (2001) describes it thus:

…photo elicitation best begins with open-ended viewing, first allowing the informants to say whatever they wish. This approach is more likely to produce unforeseen information and commentary. If you immediately start with specific questions, the informant is likely to get the message that those are the only topics you want information on and restrict their subsequent commentary to those points or other details that you bring up (p. 52).

Thus, this second stage was largely participant-driven. Respondents simply chose pictures as they wished and provided a commentary about them. If necessary, to encourage dialogue, phrases like “Tell me about this photograph” and “Why did you choose to take this photo?” were used.

The third stage of the interview was semi-structured and required participants to complete and choose one of their photos to match each of five written photo-statements. This stage was deliberately placed at the conclusion of the interview to prevent the semi-structured nature
(i.e., prescribed, open-ended photo-statements) from influencing the students’ discussions about their photographs. This method was adapted from the work of Darbyshire et al. (2005) who used photo-statements as part of a multiple method qualitative approach to investigate children’s perceptions and experiences of place, space and physical activity. Five open-ended photo-statements were created for this study which related to the first research objective concerning the ways students experience school camp. The following two photo-statements were adopted from those used by MacDougall, Schiller and Darbyshire as outlined in his Access Grid presentation (13 August 2007). 25

1) “This is my favourite photo from camp because……”
2) “This photo from camp makes me feel…..because……”

The remaining three photo-statements were generated specifically for use in this study. The third photo-statement is consistent with the study instructions students were given prior to going to camp (see Section 4.3.1).

3) “This photo of……shows what camp was like for me best because……”

The final two statements were designed to elicit students’ most positive and negative experiences from camp.

4) “What I liked most at camp was……because……”
5) “What I liked least about camp was……because……”

The students completed these statements on prepared sheets of paper and the numbers of the photographs chosen were recorded. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were given their photographs.

4.3.4 Camp observation days

The researcher attended the second day of the first school camp held by each school. The purpose of the camp observation days was three-fold. First, they enabled the researcher to gain insight into the atmosphere of the school camps; second, to gain an appreciation of the physical setting of the camps; and third, to allow the researcher to meet school staff and create an opportunity to discuss different aspects of the school camps they had organised. The researcher did not participate in any of the camp activities, but simply observed the proceedings and recorded observations with the use of a digital voice recorder.

25 See Chapter Three, Section 3.2.2, footnote 16 for more detail regarding MacDougall’s Access Grid presentation.
4.3.5 Ethical considerations

The theoretical underpinnings of the ethical issues associated with photo-elicitation techniques have been discussed in Chapter Three (Section 3.3). The application of photo-elicitation interviews as described above shows how these ethical issues became an important consideration in this study. By way of summary, the procedures addressing these ethical issues are presented below.

- Informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents/guardians to participate in the study.
- In accordance with photovoice ethics, individual participants retained ownership of their photographs. In light of this, the researcher did not view students’ photographs prior to their interview, therefore, students were the first people (outside of the photo lab) to see the images they had taken.
- Consent was gained (from participants and parents/guardians) to use the images they produced in any presentation of the results. Consent was granted on the condition that all identifying features of people in the photographs would be obscured.
- Individual participants retained three copies of their photographs: hard copies; digital copies; and the film negatives.
- Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) advocate that consent should be gained from subjects in participants’ photographs. This was not practicable in this study. Also, the topic under investigation is not inherently sensitive. However, the issue of representing other individuals in photographs was addressed by discussing with participants the responsibility they had with a research camera. They were advised that they should only take photographs of other people if they, the photographer, would be happy to have been similarly photographed.
- No suggestion was made on the part of the researcher as to what participants might photograph.

4.3.6 Data collection summary

Thirty-three of the thirty-four participants returned their cameras. Thus, the attrition rate for the study was 3%. To ascertain what had happened to the one missing camera and obtain data to evaluate the photo-elicitation method, a traditional words-alone qualitative interview was conducted with the student who did not return his camera. Thus, all 34 participants were interviewed.
The 33 students who participated in a photo-elicitation interview produced 731 photographs that were used during the interviews. Thirty-two students produced 16 or more photographs. The remaining student produced just 8 useable images, despite the whole film being exposed. Seven of these photographs were of one particular activity in which the student had participated at camp.

The average length of the 32 useable interviews was 35.7 minutes (range 23-53 minutes). There were differences in the average duration of interviews between male and female participants. The average length of the interviews with female participants was 37.9 minutes and the average length of the interviews with male students was 33.2 minutes.

4.4 Data analysis

4.4.1 Interview data

Open-ended interviews, facilitated by participant-generated photographs, were used to gather students’ descriptions of their school camp experience and were the starting point for the analysis. Consequently, data analysis begun during the first interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). All interviews were transcribed using Olympus DSS Player Pro Transcription software. These text files were then imported into NVivo 2.0; a software package for the management of qualitative data. This programme was used to assist the analysis and interpretation of the interview data.

Owing to the exploratory nature of this study, an open-ended, thematic coding structure was developed (Flick, 2006). To do this, the researcher immersed herself in the data and searched for dominant themes and concepts, or “repeatable regularities” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). In recognition of the researcher’s role in the analysis and her having read widely in the outdoor education field, themes did not simply ‘emerge’. Instead, as Richards (2005) wrote “the researcher ‘emerges’ ideas, categories, concepts, themes, hunches and ways of relating them” (p. 68). Consequently, both a priori and a posteriori categories were created (Wellington & Szczersinski, 2007).

The interview datum from the student who did not return his camera was excluded from all thematic analyses regarding the school camp experience, as it was not gathered in the context of a photo-elicitation interview. The interview and photo-statement data from the student who only produced eight useable images were also not included in the overall thematic analysis because of the limited number of photographs (and camp experiences depicted) that were able
to ‘drive’ the interview. Data from both these interviews did, however, contribute to analysis and evaluation of the photo-elicitation interview method in the context of school camps in New Zealand.

4.4.2 Photo-statement data
Participants’ photo-statements were grouped according to the five statements. The statements were analysed in terms of the participant’s interpretation of the photograph, that is, the text following the word ‘because’. As with the interview analysis, thematic coding was conducted. Each of the five statement groups were analysed separately and common themes emerged across the first four statement groups. These four groups of statements were also subjected to a concordance analysis. The themes that emerged from the fifth group, “What I liked least about camp”, did not conform to this common theme structure. Consequently, a separate thematic structure was developed for this group of statements.

Concordance analysis
Once the dominant themes for the photo-statements had been determined, a concordance analysis was conducted that recorded the presence or absence of each theme in each photo-statement. The researcher conducted this process three times, each time comparing the current analysis with the previous. Where discrepancies existed, individual statements were reviewed to determine the outcome. Once a relatively stable set of themes had been achieved, the statements and theme categories were given to two other people (raters), not directly associated with the research, to analyse independently. In the interests of simplicity, only the four statement groups that demonstrated the common set of themes were given to the two independent raters. The rationale for this decision was two-fold. First, the researcher wanted to minimise the time commitment for the independent raters and, second, the independent raters were not intimate with the data, so two thematic structures could have caused confusion and reduced the quality of their concordance analyses.

One rater was a postgraduate social science research student at Lincoln University who has completed a recreation degree in outdoor leadership and worked in both the outdoor/environmental education and adventure tourism industries. The second rater was an experienced outdoor education practitioner, who has worked in secondary schools in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

26 See Chapter Four, Section 4.3.3 for a list of the photo-statements.
27 Currently, he is the Head of Outdoor Education at another secondary school in Canterbury, New Zealand.
These two people, using the themes established by the researcher, indicated the presence or absence of each theme in each statement. They were also asked to comment on and make suggestions regarding the suitability of the themes chosen by the researcher, the theme explanations and the choice of theme labels. Once completed, the responses of the researcher and two independent raters were compared. Fleiss’ (1981) generalised kappa was used to quantify the level of agreement between the three raters. A generalised kappa is an index and “can be interpreted as a chance corrected measure of agreement among three or more raters, each of whom independently classifies each of a sample of subjects into one set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories” (King, 2004, p. 4). The generalised kappa was calculated using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) macro developed by David Nichols28 (King, 2004).

4.5 Chapter summary
A qualitative research approach called photo-elicitation interviews was used to gather data regarding the ways in which Year 10 secondary school students experience a school-based outdoor education programme known as school camp. Thirty-four students were provided with disposable cameras and asked to produce a series of photographs which portrayed ‘what school camp was like for them’. Students then participated in an interview with the researcher, during which their photographs were used as stimuli to generate conversations about camp. The data were subjected to thematic and concordance analyses. (The limitations of the approach described in this chapter will be discussed in the final chapter, Chapter Nine.)

The results of the study are presented in the following two chapters. The insights which these data provide help address the current dearth of knowledge of student experience in the outdoor/adventure education field. Students’ quotes and photographs are used to provide ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) and to substantiate the researcher’s interpretations of the school camp experience.

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PART C: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which New Zealand secondary school students experience an outdoor education programme called ‘school camp’. To this end, Part C presents the results of the research process (as outlined in Chapter Four) that was undertaken to meet this objective. It is organised into two chapters: Chapter Five reports the results from the photo-elicitation interviews; and Chapter Six reports the results from the photo-statements completed by the students. Students’ quotes and written photo-statements are used throughout both chapters to illustrate the recurring themes. Their language has been transcribed and reproduced verbatim to reflect current teenage language as accurately as possible. A particular feature of the verbal quotations is students’ prolific, but linguistically redundant, use of the word ‘like’. This characteristic of the language New Zealand teenagers use has been noted in previous studies (Weaver, 2002).
Chapter Five

WHAT IS SCHOOL CAMP? – INSIGHTS FROM YEAR 10 STUDENTS: INTERVIEW RESULTS

“When native eyes interpret and enlarge upon the photographic content, through interviewing with photographs, the potential range of data enlarges beyond that contained in the photographs themselves.”

( Collier Jr & Collier, 1986, p. 99)

This chapter presents the results from the photo-elicitation interviews. It is organised into four sections. Section One describes the purpose of school camp from the perspective of the students. Then, the following three sections describe each of the dominant themes that students expressed during their interviews: ‘camp as fun’; ‘camp as social interaction’; and ‘camp as difference’.

5.1 The purpose of school camp

According to these students, school camp had four primary purposes: to have fun; to get to know other people; as an end-of-year event; and to do new things or learn new skills. There were, however, two key differences between Pewsey Vale and Athens Academy students. Getting to know other people was more salient among Pewsey Vale students than Athens Academy students. Athens Academy students, while Pewsey Vale students simply spoke of doing new things. The following quotations encapsulate these four primary purposes of school camp from the perspective of the student.

**Purposes: Getting to know other people/Fun**

Well I found for me it was just getting to know a lot of people, so that’s probably what the school was hoping to happen. Like everyone, just getting to know each other better and getting to know people you haven’t been able to be around a whole lot in school. So yeah that was good, and.....just getting away from everything and just enjoying yourself [Michael, Pewsey Vale].

**Purposes: To do new things/Getting to know other people**

Hmmm...kind of get us out doing more things that we wouldn’t usually and kind of encourage us to be more adventurous, and well the groups were obviously meant to help us get to know other people and make new friends and things like that and I guess some time was good for people bonding as a class, and ahh...yeah I dunno. It’s kind of hard to just sum up [Orchid, Pewsey Vale].

**Purposes: End-of-year event/Learn outdoor skills/Fun**

...I think one [purpose] could have been, like, just as an end-of-year activity for us to all have one last time together before we split up for Year 11, 12 and 13. Ummmm...kind of like to prepare us for things, if we go camping when we’re older,
Part C: Results

if we go tramping or anything. Ummm…just as a fun time…that’s mainly what I think it was about [Jessica, Athens Academy].

Secondary purposes articulated by students included to challenge themselves, to learn about themselves, and to get to know their teachers.

The strength with which students understood camp to be primarily about social opportunities was further reinforced by comments from three students who felt that camps were more suited to being held earlier in the year, rather than the end. Andy (Athens Academy) thought that camp should be held earlier in the year in order to reap the social benefits attained at camp back at school, and two Pewsey Vale students seemed to have difficulty understanding why their camp was held at the end of year, rather than at the beginning of the year when people were less likely to know their peers.

Well, I think it was supposed to be [to] get to know the people, but they put it at the end [of the year]…. but yeah, I think the whole thing was to get to know people that you didn’t know. But that happened before [because they had spent the year at school together], so everyone knew everyone, so it didn’t work [Ginger, Pewsey Vale].

Ginger’s concluding assertion here, “it didn’t work”, may be subject to question given the extensive social emphasis all students in this study placed on school camp, and their repeated reference to the value of school camps in extending students’ friendship circles. This theme will be presented in greater detail in Section 5.3.

Discussions regarding the purpose of camp took place near the end of each interview. Prior to discussing the purpose of camp, as students talked about their photographs, school camp was primarily portrayed as a positive and fun experience. Thus, not only did students perceive one purpose of camp to be ‘to have fun’, but they also spoke of the ‘fun’ times that they had. When asked what he appreciated most about camp, Peter (Pewsey Vale), for example, replied “Ummm…probably it was fun, and that was the thing, I wasn’t bored. I was never bored, which was cool, and satisfaction.”
5.2 Camp as fun

“It was fun. We did lots of random things.”
(Peter, Pewsey Vale)

“[Camp is] like pretty much fun times, that’s what I think of it.”
(Jessica, Athens Academy)

School camp is a ‘fun’ experience. The students in this study primarily recounted the positive aspects of their school camp which they commonly described as ‘fun’. Although a few students described aspects of camp which they did not enjoy, students primarily emphasised the ‘fun’ or ‘good times’ they had at camp. Cypris (Pewsey Vale) highlighted the fact that camp was meant to be fun when she took a picture of a friend who was ill during camp and explained that being unwell at camp “makes it not so fun, at least for them.”

For the most part, students said they took photographs that portrayed things that they enjoyed or were ‘fun’. Matt (Pewsey Vale) summarised camp simply by saying “We had so much fun.” Students’ understanding of camp as being an enjoyable event was encapsulated by Alana (Pewsey Vale) who photographed the bus trip to camp because on the bus “you still have fun and stuff”, so she thought it was part of camp.

Whatever the photographic content, students’ narratives continually referred to notions of ‘camp as fun’. Using their photographs, students explained an assortment of specific camp situations which demonstrated that, for them, camp was an enjoyable experience. Students enjoyed the technical activities or more structured aspects of camp.

It [the mud run] was really fun and really muddy and really smelly, but it was still fun [Andy, Athens Academy].

And, this is, oh, cooking dinner. It was good fun, yeah, so our group was pretty good at cooking it [Tom, Pewsey Vale].

That was abseiling which was really fun [Peter, Pewsey Vale].

They also enjoyed the less structured aspects of camp such as informal games, free-time, sleeping in the bunkrooms or the campfire.

Well, these two (respondent indicates to two photos), they were taken when we were playing ‘Invasion’……the red chases the blue, the blue chases the yellow and the yellow chases the red. And that was really fun [Orchid, Pewsey Vale].
Part C: Results

…this one, ummm…it’s of like the, it’s three girls in my class and they were lying on this rug thing with a sleeping bag over them and ummm…just talking and whatever and there was like a group of us, like me and my better, like closer friends and we were sitting over here and we were like “what do you reckon? Do think we should all bombard [them] like with the sleeping bag?”, “Yup, sounds like a good idea, let’s go.” So that’s what we did, and we totally bombarded them, it was very fun [Lizzie, Pewsey Vale].

…two people didn’t go to sleep at all – the whole night, but I got the last one and a half hours to sleep. So that was pretty fun [Toaster, Pewsey Vale].

…every camp you go on you always have a campfire, so it (the photograph) symbolises camp and stuff and yeah…we had heaps of fun and told heaps of different random stories [Mary-Ann, Athens Academy].

One result of camp being a ‘fun experience’ was that students reported diversification of their social interactions back at school because camp provided them with a common experience to which they could relate. Stacey (Athens Academy) said “…before camp you’d have been like I don’t want to sit here, I want to go sit with my friends and now you’re just like “Hey, camp was fun wasn’t it?”” Similarly, Jon (Pewsey Vale) commented that at school he can relate with more people now because they can talk about the fun that they had at camp.

When discussing their photographs and the enjoyment of camp, students often laughed and began describing incidents at camp that they found amusing. Consequently, another major aspect of the ‘camp as fun’ theme was the many humorous or incidental moments that students had captured on film and recounted during their interviews.

5.2.1 Humorous and incidental moments at camp

Many of the incidents at camp recalled by students were valued highly simply because they were ‘funny’ and generated pleasant memories. For example, several of the Pewsey Vale boys had a photograph of a stick figure that another student had created on the ground while they were waiting to go abseiling. Jessica (Athens Academy) took a photograph of her friend climbing under a fence while they were participating in their navigation activity, simply because she thought it was funny, and Lilli (Pewsey Vale) captured a “funny conversation” she had with a friend by photographing the ground where they had been drawing in the dirt at the time. In this way, then, it seems that much of students’ camp experiences were defined by incidental moments. Below are two accounts of humorous situations at camp.

…this one is me covered in mud with Silke, who’s also covered in mud. Silke threw Debbie in [the mud] and Debbie didn’t want to go in, so we threw Silke in and Silke didn’t want to go in and Silke got stuck. And we couldn’t pull her out because our hands were covered in mud, so she kept on slipping; the mud was quite
disgusting really. You couldn’t move and you’d like bring your leg up and you’d like fall over this way (Stacey demonstrates) and Vanessa was making her mud angel, she was like lying on her back going like this (Stacey demonstrates) and then she couldn’t get straight again, so she had to like, you know back stroke out of it [the mud]. But it didn’t quite work, it’s really funny, we were laughing there the whole time [Stacey, Athens Academy].

We were talking to Mr Jackson and he was like, our class was organising games and, so that was fine and well actually he was trying to explain [the game] to us and Harri was like “Oh why don’t we do this game?” and it was the game he was explaining. He was like “Yes, that’s what I’m trying to tell you about” and she was like “Ohhh...” Anyway, so we had to cut up the wool [for the game] and, so she [Harri] went off to get a knife from the kitchen and they gave her that [pointing to the bread knife in her photograph] and then I went and I was like “Oh…can I please have a knife?” and they [the adults] were like “OK, well I’m sorry this is the sharpest one I could find” [they gave her a sharp knife] and they gave her that one [bread knife] and we said it was a test of character (laughs) [Alana, Pewsey Vale].

While students recalled a wide variety of ‘fun’ and amusing situations that occurred at camp, the fun nature of what students did appears to have been primarily generated by the presence of students’ peers. The activities were ‘fun’ because of the people with whom they were participating. Jon (Pewsey Vale) commented that what made the activities “cool” was “being with your mates, [because] it would have been gay\(^{29}\) without them.” Similarly, Caitlan (Athens Academy) said that the walk to the mud run was good because of the positive social environment. She said “our whole group got along and when we were walking down the mountain was, [we] were just having like a good talk and stuff and that was fun cause usually our class doesn’t get along too well.” In sum, then, camp was a fun experience primarily because it was a social experience which afforded students opportunities to spend time and interact with other people, notably their peers.

I really really enjoyed the people on camp, yeah, they really made it, made it fun [Harri, Pewsey Vale].

\(^{29}\)‘The word ‘gay’ is commonly used by young people in a pejorative non-sexualised way to describe something not considered good. In this context, it means ‘rubbish’ or ‘lame’ and does not necessarily imply homosexuality” (retrieved May 24, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay).
5.3 Camp as social interaction

“You can’t really have camp without people and like memories without people, like you can, but they’re not fun. Like if I went on camp by myself, I would just be like bored out of my brains, sitting there twiddling my thumbs, but yeah, without people there’s pretty much nothing.”

(Mary Ann, Athens Academy)

“Camp was 10/10 to just hang out with your mates and stuff.”

(Jon, Pewsey Vale)

School camp is a social experience. This group of Year 10 students valued highly their school camp for the social interaction opportunities it afforded them. It was this social aspect of school camp which dominated students’ photographic and verbal accounts. Andy (Athens Academy), for example, said “You can tell from my photos that camp for me is about friends,” and Gretchen (Pewsey Vale) said “Like camp for me is just hanging out with my friends.” Even the bus trip to and from camp was “cool just [being] with friends” (Tom, Pewsey Vale).

There was, however, a subtle difference in the way students from each school discussed the social aspects of camp. Pewsey Vale students emphasised getting to know their peers, while Athens Academy students emphasised simply being together. This difference was particularly salient when students raised their forthcoming transition to senior secondary school.

5.3.1 Transitioning from Year 10 to senior school

When students discussed school camp in terms of the social experience it provided them, they seemed acutely aware that they were finishing Year 10 and, consequently, their junior secondary school years. At Pewsey Vale, Year 10 is the last year in which students attend classes in individual class groups. During their senior years (Years 11-13), their class groups will be determined by their school house and who chooses to take the same school subjects as themselves. This knowledge seemed to be a factor in students’ appreciation of having the opportunity to spend time with their peers. Lilli (Pewsey Vale) said…

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30 In New Zealand, many schools have a house system. On enrolment at the school, each student is allocated to a house group and they will be part of that house for their entire time at that school. These house groupings are usually used to encourage school community and inter-house competition at school sporting or cultural competitions.
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…it is the last camp before you go into senior college because they don’t do camps there and it was cool for just everyone to be together, it was kind of like bringing everyone together because we’re all going to be in different classes next year, so it was an opportunity to get to know people who could be in your form class, rather than just knowing people, like if it had been a single class camp then you probably would have got separated from all those people next year……cause they do the vertical form classes based on houses and so, it was cool to find out who is in your house and who could be in your form class because of being in your house which is fun.

In contrast, Athens Academy students highlighted how school camp was the last time they would be together as a class before they moved onto senior school, thus there was an element of nostalgia. Jayne (Athens Academy), for example, thought that camp was “Pretty important, cause it’s the last time we really get to spend time together as a class and it’s just fun”, and Kate (Athens Academy) said “we sat round the campfire and had marshmallows and just talked, so that was pretty good, to be with your class because you won’t be with them next year.”

The relational and social experience of camp was reinforced by the content of the students’ photographs. The majority of students’ photographs depicted people and social situations, yet even the few photographs that did not portray people were captured for social reasons. For example, two Pewsey Vale students had photographs of their bunkroom with a number of LiftPlus bottles lined up on the balcony. Peter’s (Pewsey Vale) interpretation of his image (Figure 2, p. 66) is given below and identifies the drinking of LiftPlus as being part of Year 10 at his school.

Yeah, that was our cabin, and it sort of became famous afterwards because all of my friends drink heaps of LiftPlus bottles. And that was at the end of the camp and we got them up on the banister and lots of people were taking pictures……Cause, it’s good to drink, because it’s, like, a really big thing in our year, to drink LiftPlus, it’s like the coffee version. Everyone is like, “I need my LiftPlus” (laughs).

31 LiftPlus is a bottled “energy” drink available in New Zealand.
Students consistently raised this social theme during their interviews and often described the social processes at camp as “bonding” or becoming “tighter” with their peers. Thus, there was a consistent understanding among these students that camp was about social interaction. When asked why she thought the majority of her photographs portrayed people, Maureen (Athens Academy) explained: “cause that’s kind of what camps [are] about, like getting to know everyone and stuff, like hanging out with new people and your friends and class.” Stephen (Pewsey Vale) commented that what he would remember the most was “hanging out with friends and like, getting to know them,” and Tulip (Pewsey Vale) said “…just because you get to know people that bit more. That’s the whole thing about camp, getting to know people.”

### 5.3.2 Getting to know other people

As students discussed their photographs, a strong theme that emerged was the ways in which camp provided opportunities for them to develop relationships or get to know other people. School camp can provide students with opportunities to spend time and develop their relationships with friends. This was the case for some students like Lizzie (Pewsey Vale). She confessed that at school she usually spent much of her time with students outside of her year group; this meant that, for her, camp allowed her to develop her current friendships. Most students, however, seemed to value highly school camp more in terms of the ways in which they were able to extend their peer networks or get to know other people. Andy (Athens Academy) commented the following, noting that despite having been at school for an entire
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year with other people in her year group, camp was the first opportunity she developed friendships with them.

...you know the best was that, like, I know all these guys a lot like they’re all my friends in the class, but then on the ‘outcamp’, the other group, you learnt about the other ones that aren’t in the group [her group of close friends] as well, like you get to know them and it’s funny, in a whole year you don’t really know what those girls are like and then you find out what they’re like and it’s completely different like, I dunno you just, it’s like another friend. Like I’ve got so many more friends, like in the other classes as well. Yeah...It was fun.

Michael (Pewsey Vale) extended the contrast between developing relationships with current friends and other people by indicating that there was something inherent to the ‘place’ of camp that caused students to spend time with other people, not their friends.

It’s [camp] not such a place where like you hang out with your friends, but everyone else kind of like, and you get heaps of free-time, so it’s like, it gets boring after a while just to play with your own friends or whatever, so it’s just good to talk to other people cause you’re round them so much you kind of get to know them more.

In Michael’s quote, above, he attributes his getting to know other people at camp to simply being together for extended periods of time. Tulip (Pewsey Vale) reinforced this idea by mentioning that she does not usually spend time with people first thing in the morning.

I think I got quite close to friends who I don’t usually hang out with at camp. You get more of a chance to know people a bit better, like first thing in the morning when they get up. Ummm...yeah, just people I don’t usually hang out with that much, just getting to know them a bit better and ummm...the people I do know, just getting that bit closer and yeah.

Students discussed a wide variety of situations where they were able to ‘hang out’ with their friends and get to know other people. Two particular locales for social interaction were repeatedly depicted in students’ photographs and raised during their interviews: Pewsey Vale students valued highly the periods of free-time at camp, and Athens Academy students appreciated their campfire time during ‘outcamp’. The structured activities also facilitated social interaction, although these were emphasised to a lesser extent.

5.3.3 ‘Mucking around’

Pewsey Vale students seemed to appreciate the relative freedom of time during camp which had little formal structure and was often described as ‘just mucking round’ (Figure 3 & Figure 4, p. 68). Students enjoyed these periods of free-time and many of their photographs depicted groups of people playing volleyball, sitting on the grass talking, playing guitars or simply ‘mucking around’. Harri (Pewsey Vale) highlighted the importance of these periods of free-
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time when she commented that what she would remember most about camp was simply lying on the grass talking with friends and talking in her bunkroom at night.

…it was really the people, yeah, all the fun that I just had with my friends and the talking at night time and the, just lying on the grass and just talking (laughs). Ummm…yeah, just being with people a lot, it was really good, so I know we did a whole bunch of other stuff, and I remember all that, but yeah…just doing it all with my friends, yeah…[that] made it really fun.

Figure 3: ‘Mucking around’ – “a cool thing to do”.

Figure 4: Free-time at camp
Students highlighted the importance they placed on the periods of free-time in which they were able to choose what they did, by making comparisons with the more structured aspects of camp. Peter (Pewsey Vale) highlighted his appreciation of the periods of free-time in which he was able to choose what he did by contrasting Year 10 camp with what usually happens at ‘most camps’.

…it was good, because most camps they try to put everything in, so you don’t get any time to relax and this time we got to do activities, but we got time to do recreational [activities] and do what we wanted, which was really good.

Then, Toaster (Pewsey Vale) commented that during free-time he did not feel pressured by time constraints as he did during the formal, structured activities.

…[free-time] was probably when, it was probably the most fun we had. Oh, of course there were other things, but just free-time was free-time I guess……the activities were run on a strict basis and had to be done by a certain time, I probably would have enjoyed coasteering even more if we hadn’t had much of a time limit, like I would have liked to have jumped off [the rocks] heaps of times. And ah… yeah, free-time, you were given a time limit, like and hour or half-an-hour, but you didn’t think about that most of the time. You spent all the time, just you know hanging out and playing volleyball and eating lollies.

A response from Michael (Pewsey Vale) shed some light on a possible reason why these times were important. For him, Year 10 camp allowed him to spend three days with his friends, something that was not easily accomplished outside of school camp. He said his camp highlight was…

… just hanging out with friends, mucking round. Like, cause it’s not often you can just go for, like, go away for three days with all your friends and just kind of do what you want, so it was good to just do that and just knowing that it was the last camp we’re all going to have, so trying to make the most of it.

5.3.4 Campfire

Athens Academy students did not refer to aspects of camp as being ‘free-time’. However, a recurrent theme from these students was the ways in which they considered important the campfire which was held during the evening they camped out. From the perspective of the Athens Academy students, the campfire seemed to be a particularly important aspect of their social experience at camp as notions of ‘togetherness’ and nostalgia were emphasised (Figure 5, p. 70). Stacey (Athens Academy) described the campfire in the following way.

See Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1, footnote 20 for a description of this activity.
It [the campfire] was just like sitting there with your class and just yeah, talking and telling stories……and I took that photo just because it’s our whole class together and we’re not going to be able to have that again for a while, or ever.

Andy (Athens Academy) spoke of the way her class honoured two of her classmates who were leaving Athens Academy at the end of the year.

There were two girls in the other group that are leaving……and umm…we all sat round the camp fire and said one thing we like about our class and one thing each that we’re going to miss about those two. It was a very cheesy moment, I probably said the cheesiest ever, but it was fun.

Then, Margaret (Athens Academy) described how her class recalled times with classmates who were no longer part of their class.

Cos we went through moments of like Year 9 and 10, like as a class, and I dunno, we were talking about a girl who used to be in our class and how she liked brightened everything up and what would happen if she was there, stuff like that.

In this sense, then, the campfire seems to have provided opportunities to reminisce and represented a type of closure to the past before students move onto their senior secondary school years the following year.

Figure 5: Campfire – together one last time

5.3.5 The structured activities
Participation in the technical activities also contributed to camp as a social experience. This seemed to be a particularly important context for the minority of Pewsey Vale students who
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did not enjoy the freedom associated with free-time. Orchid (Pewsey Vale) said that she did not do much during the free-time and it “just seemed to drag on for a bit” and Jonty commented that the technical activities were the main part of camp for him and that he was just “waiting for the next activity.” Nevertheless, the emphasis on sociality also arose when students talked about the structured activities in which they participated.

The importance of students’ peers during the structured activities is perhaps best illustrated by the way in which some students’ enjoyment seemed to be based entirely on the presence of classmates. For example, Alana and Cypris (Pewsey Vale) commented that usually they disliked doing high ropes courses or orienteering, but that because of their social interactions during those activities, they enjoyed them.

I usually don’t like high ropes, but I just found it quite fun because everyone was quite encouraging and stuff, so that was cool [Alana, Pewsey Vale].

We did orienteering, it was probably my favourite activity, usually I hate it, but it was just really fun I was with someone else who really wanted to do well and run, so we ran [Cypris, Pewsey Vale].

Margaret’s (Athens Academy) quote below encapsulates similar ideas.

All the people that got in were all the people that actually like do stuff in our class, like jump in like have a go at things, so they made it really fun to be around [Margaret, Athens Academy].

Thus, rather than emphasising doing the activity, students focused on the fact that they were doing the activities with their peers. For example, rather than discussing ‘orienteering’, Wayne (Pewsey Vale) described how during the activity he made daisy chains with his friends.

Although the social aspects seemed to contribute to the students’ enjoyment of the structured activities, few students commented on the role of their activity instructors. Thus, the social experiences of students during the activities seem to have been dominated by their peers, despite the presence of other people.

Furthermore, students seemed to appreciate working as a team and helping each other out during the activities. Thus, the activities also contributed to the ways in which students developed relationships and, consequently, reinforce camp as being primarily a social experience. When discussing a photograph of her group preparing to go river crossing, Caitlan (Athens Academy) said “it was fun like getting as a team and helping each other across and
encouraging each other and stuff. It was just fun.” Likewise, Pewsey Vale students participated in a team-building exercise which required students to place five rubber tyres on one of three poles using only ropes. The poles were in the centre of a circle and the circle was a boundary line over which the students were not allowed to step. The students who discussed this activity seemed to enjoy it because they had to solve the problem together as a team.

…[my activity group] had quite a few of my mates in there and that. But also, just like working together as a team, there was no one who sort of bothers you and that and at the end of orienteering we had a team challenge, like to see if we could beat the other teams at doing [it], sort of it was like a team-building activity and we won that too, it was just good fun like working in with people and that [Jonty, Pewsey Vale].

The above quote from Jonty is concerned with group achievement, and while there was also a subtle theme of self-achievement that arose during discussions about the technical activities, the dominant theme remained a social one. This was particularly evident when Pewsey Vale students expressed delight in seeing their peers challenge themselves and accomplish physical tasks. For example, when asked about what other pictures he would have liked to have taken, Jonty (Pewsey Vale) responded with:

Other people actually doing the high ropes like a few people raced up and that, so that was quite cool…..Yeah and just like seeing people completing what they hadn’t done. What they didn’t think they could do. And so, it’d be good to take photos of people achieving that and stuff like that. ……I just like, it’s good to see people achieve what they haven’t done before and seeing like their expression on their faces and stuff like that. Pretty much.

Then, when commenting on his coasteering activity, Jonty spoke of how they were able to jump off the rocks into the water and he commented “we got to jump off the rocks, which was quite high out of the water, which I really enjoy just seeing people do that and stuff like that.” Another student, Tom (Pewsey Vale), who classified himself as being “confident and good with heights”, said it was good to encourage other members of his group to try doing some of the activities. A more extensive account came from Lizzie (Pewsey Vale) when she was talking about her time at the high ropes course.

……I was very proud of Tulip because she is totally afraid of heights and she did some pretty cool stuff and I thought my highlight was just seeing how much she improved. Ummm...she just wanted to climb up the ladder and that was all she wanted to do, but when she got to the top of the ladder and she started climbing up the staples and then she went and did just the postman’s walks [a high ropes activity]……she’s totally freaked out, but she did that and then she went on and did the rope thingy above, which was like, well I considered it to be one of the hardest things……but she did that one alright, she was totally freaked out.
ummmm… and she was like “ok, I’m not doing anything else” and then she went up and did the buoy one [another high ropes activity]…so she went and did that one and then she said “oh I’ll just see if I can climb up the staples to the big pole thing above, ummm…I won’t do it because that’s far too high”......when she got up there I was like just “go on, do it” and she was like “oh alright, no no, I’m too scared”……but she actually made it across the highest thing …so yeah, that was my highlight though.

While students’ narratives of ‘camp as a social experience’ primarily centred on interaction with their peers, a weaker theme that emerged from both camps was student-teacher interactions.

5.3.6 Student-teacher interactions

Camp was also a social experience in terms of interaction between students and teachers. Teachers featured in the majority of students’ accounts. Female students’ accounts, however, differed from those of male students. Three male students had photographs of a teacher and when they discussed the presence of their teachers at camp, they primarily spoke of how the teachers reacted to several practical jokes some of the male students initiated, or how the teachers prevented them staying up late and talking. In contrast, nearly all female students from Pewsey Vale had photographed some of their teachers who attended camp with them. The girls seemed to have intentionally taken these pictures because they considered teachers to be an important part of camp. For example, Cypris (Pewsey Vale) said, “I was thinking when I got the camera that I would want to take some photos of the teachers, because they are usually a really important part of the camp.” Moreover, these students seemed to value highly being at camp with their teachers because it gave them an opportunity to interact with them and get to know them outside of the normal school environment.

It was really cool, because one of my teachers, well my form teacher, she gets on really well with our whole class and all the other classes and it was cool just to see her more cause we like see her only for about an hour a day [at school]. It was cool for her to just be there. And the other teachers, I haven’t been taught by any of them, so it was cool to actually meet them and find out what they were like [Lilli, Pewsey Vale].

Tulip (Pewsey Vale) expressed similar ideas and contrasted her interactions with teachers at camp to those with which she is usually accustomed at school

They [teachers] are a really important part of camp because you see them outside the classroom and they have a personality and you get to see them a bit differently and I dunno more on a friendship basis than the “sit down and do your work” kind of thing. It’s really good to get to know them and it’s fun and it’s hilarious.
Athens Academy students did not express the same expectation to interact with their teachers in a non-school environment as the Pewsey Vale girls, and few Athens Academy students had photographs of their teachers. They did, however, express an appreciation having had the opportunity to interact with their teachers outside of school. Grace (Athens Academy), for example, thought camp was important because you “have that freedom to just hang with the teachers and stuff cause you only have them in the classroom and you don’t really see them out of school. That’s quite fun as well.” When discussing the purpose of camp, Andy (Athens Academy) said…

…you know so much more about the teachers, so much more about yourselves. Like the teachers on camp were sitting there studying for degrees they were getting or something. That was interesting cause like you don’t know that they’re doing that you don’t actually…like another teacher was sitting there writing a German dictionary that she’s going to publish and put out cause she’s a German teacher and I dunno, they’re just trying hard to be better for us. So you feel, you’re nicer to the teachers now cause you understand how much work they put into it.

Not all student-teacher interactions were positive though. Jayne (Athens Academy), for example, felt as if the teachers were “lurking” and Margaret (Athens Academy) described how she felt her teachers were rude and judgemental because they had incorrectly perceived her behaviour on camp as being negative. When queried further about her picture of her teachers, Cypris (Pewsey Vale) said,

Well, I dunno, it was really strange on camp this year. The teachers were really weird like, it was really odd. Ohhh…Mrs Johnson was sick, so she was really grouchy and I didn’t really know her that much so I was like err…ok. And umm…I dunno, Miss Spencer, she’s been away in France and she only just came back on the Friday before camp, so she was there on Friday and was like “Hello, goodbye, don’t forget your camp stuff”, and on Monday she was like “Hello”, and then she had to go away on the Monday night and so we didn’t see her from lunchtime until the next day. She came back really late, after our devotion and everything and she missed it and it was kind of like ohh…ok, we’ve been abandoned. It was just really weird; we didn’t really get time to talk to any teachers about anything or anything they were just like, yae…so, I dunno……they were all a little odd and not really involved……so it was kind of like we weren’t really near them all that much, and they were all kind of really sick and tired and grumpy. Not so much grumpy, just sick and tired, hmmm…stressed out I guess. They all had like reports they had just done.

In sum, then, for this group of students school camp was primarily a social experience that provided them with opportunities to be together with their peers, get to know their peers, and to broaden their peer networks. As students discussed their photographs from this social perspective, they referred to school camp as being a ‘different experience’ from their usual home or school environments.
5.4 **Camp as difference**

“It’s [camp] something different, you know, you don’t do it all the time.”

(Harri, Pewsey Vale)

“It’ll remember] the fact that we went for us four [her close friends] and we went with a different group of people, like half the class that we don’t usually go with and it was good because it wasn’t, there was no bitchiness, there was nothing, it was just getting to know different people that we don’t hang out with often, doing different activities and that was fun.”

(Grace, Athens Academy)

School camp is different when compared with students’ usual school and home environments. According to these students, camp is different in two main ways: the activities in which they engaged, and the social context.

Students appreciated the opportunities camp provided for them to participate in new activities. Grace (Athens Academy), for example, said that her camp allowed her to do things that she does not have the opportunity to do outside of school, and Kate (Athens Academy) enjoyed navigation because although she had never done it before, “it was good once you got the hang of it.” While students mentioned that they enjoyed doing different activities, the emphasis of the ‘camp as difference’ theme was the unique social context of camp.

Students attributed the unique social context of camp to their being able to develop relationships with their peers and broaden their peer networks. The social context of camp is unique in three ways: people are different; the social environment is more inclusive; and it provides a disruption to students’ concerns about life.

### 5.4.1 A ‘different’ side of people

An influential theme which arose from discussions about the ways that camp was different was that in this different environment, people were different. For example, Margaret (Athens Academy) said “cos people change on camp, people are different to what they’re like in Christchurch,” and Stephen (Pewsey Vale) said “I guess you see a side of them [his peers] you don’t usually see.” Linked to the idea that people were different at school camp was a perception that this difference was also more genuine. Students described this difference as people being more ‘real’ or being themselves. In each case, students compared the behaviour of their peers at camp to the way they perceived them to be in their usual school environment.
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Some people are way different when they are on camp than when they are in normal school life. Like a lot of people are really plastic [at school], like with their hair and make-up and then when you don’t have those sort of things around you, you sort of see what they are as a real person instead of like, what they are at school [Ethel, Pewsey Vale].

Andy’s (Athens Academy) comment below indicates that at school students are able to put up a façade, something that was impossible to accomplish at camp.

You see people in different environments and how they like, you can’t not be yourself for three days [and] you have to be yourself. You can’t, you can’t not be yourself and some people are so different, they’re so different at camp to [how] they are as school [Andy, Athens Academy].

Similarly, Jon’s (Pewsey Vale) comparison of camp and school indicates that unlike school, at camp there is no expectation to ‘present yourself.’

…just cause [at camp] you can be yourself and you don’t need to, like, you wear what you’re wearing and you don’t have to present yourself cause like camping is camping. It’s not like labels [as in labelled clothing] or anything [Jon, Pewsey Vale].

Harri (Pewsey Vale) provided insight into the ways in which students are able to be ‘different’ at camp. She commented how “it was really cool to see” another student on camp, who she described as “a wee bit of a loner”, participating in a ball game they played during free time. When asked if she could explain how she thought situations like this came about on camp she suggested that people were more relaxed at camp and less concerned with putting up pretences.

…I think, well maybe, because everyone is really ‘real’ on camp because you know you’re there for like the whole day……at school you can kind of, you know, be someone and then go home, but here [at camp] you’ve got to be, you know, yourself and I dunno, maybe he felt more comfortable around people when they were just having fun. You know, yeah I don’t think anyone really cared on camp about, too much about what other people thought about them. I didn’t [Harri, Pewsey Vale].

It seems, then, that camp offers respite from the expectations and norms young people are subject to back in the city, at home and at school. According to these students, they were able to see a different side of people because camp was a more inclusive environment.

5.4.2 Camp is a more inclusive environment

Stephen said that at camp he saw a different ‘side’ of people that he did not see at school and he felt that this was because they were somewhere different and doing different things, and Mary Ann (Athens Academy) commented that camp encouraged everyone to come together
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simply because they were somewhere different. Among these students, the major aspect that made camp different and encouraged (or forced) social interaction was that it was an intensive, three-day residential experience. That is, simply because “you’re with them for that whole time and working with them” (Page, Athens Academy), one got to know them better.

…just sort of being with each other for 24 hours for three days and you kind of got used to them being there and then just mixing with different people who you don’t necessarily hang out with, it was kind of easier there [Lilli, Pewsey Vale].

Probably just cause we knew we were stuck with each other, so we just had to be nice to each other and we all got along type thing [Caitlan, Athens Academy].

Several other students expressed similar ideas, also mentioning that once at camp it seemed pointless not to take the opportunity and make new friends.

Ummm…just because you’re around them for those three days and just that you can’t get away from them, like, you can’t [leave] unless you have a decent reason and stuff, you’re with those people and it’s not like you can call your Mum or Dad and make them come and get you, you’re with them, whether you like it or not. Yeah, you just got to get close to them…….you may as well make the most of it and get to know them as a friend, rather than just, like, hate them as a person [Ethel, Pewsey Vale].

Like actually living together, like it’s not going to be fun if you’re just annoyed with everyone kind of thing you’ve got to get over it [Maureen, Athens Academy].

As noted by Lilli (Pewsey Vale), interacting with different people seemed to be easier at camp. A potential explanation for this is that camp offers a more inclusive social environment (Figure 6, p. 78). Peter (Pewsey Vale), for example, said that one of the most satisfying things about camp was that he felt included and was not left out.

It’s [school camp] like a less structured environment, like in class you’re always being told to be quiet and also everybody is more relaxed, like even the students and stuff and you feel like you can talk to anyone really, yeah…that’s about it [Alana, Pewsey Vale].

Similarly, Mary Ann (Athens Academy) also compared the more inclusive environment at camp to the more segregated, ‘clique’ environment at school: “…classes uniting as one because everyone has their cliques in their classes and friends and camp just kind of like brought us together, so like a final sort of thing.”

Harri (Pewsey Vale) articulated similar ideas, and also indicated that at camp it seemed to be more acceptable to interact with people who were not necessarily her ‘friends’.
I guess that’s because there’s nothing else to do, at the same time, like you know, and when you’re with people all the time you just, because they’re there, it’s kind of like you’re living with them and you don’t feel intimidated. I dunno, you just, it’s alright to go up and talk to them and maybe even like play a game with them and get laughing about something you know. Ummm…yeah, it’s just, it seems alright, you know in volleyball……there were people on my team that I didn’t really know, but because we were playing as a team we got really, like, close you know [Harri, Pewsey Vale].

![Figure 6: The inclusive social environment of camp](image)

Conversely, the imposed camp structure also contributed to students getting to know other people because they were “forced” to work together (Jonty, Pewsey Vale). At the Athens Academy camps, groups were organised according to the Year 10 classes at school. This meant that Mary Ann (Athens Academy) was not with her close friends and, therefore, was forced to interact with other people.

Cause, well, camp’s fun and you learn different stuff and bond with people differently like if this is a classroom thing and we just pretty generally doing the stuff I wouldn’t have talked to any other people that I did, because most of my friends aren’t even in my class [Mary Ann, Athens Academy].

Similarly, Maureen said…

…like [during the] activities and stuff, you see that others need support kind of thing just like when they need it kind of thing and so when they give it to you it just like makes you stronger, stronger bond kind of thing [Maureen, Athens Academy].

At the Pewsey Vale camps, students participated in the technical activities with students of similar abilities, rather than with their friends. Wayne (Pewsey Vale) said that the reason he
got to know one particular person who he did not know well before camp was from “just being in the same group cause we’re all in groups and she was in my group when we broke in[to] little and little groups she was often with me.” Orchid’s (Pewsey Vale) account below highlights how the imposed structure of the activity groups enabled her to see a different side of one of her peers.

Ohh…well, I didn’t like my group to start of with, I thought oh no, it’s terrible, I’m with, like I was only with Cypris from my class and Louise from another class who I didn’t really know very well and then all these other guys which I’m not particularly fond of…..but then I kind of grew to like it because one of the guys who I thought was not the greatest [laughs] to put it lightly, he kind of, he wasn’t with any of his friends and I kind of saw how different he could kind of be and that was kind of cool. And cause we talked about comfort zones at the high ropes and he was kind of talking about how hanging out with different people is kind of out of your comfort zone and I kind of thought, well, for him its kind of a big, kind of step being in this sort of group. Cause everyone else was kind of a different sort of person to what he’s normally like at school and everything, so that was kind of cool [Orchid].

It seems, then, that students having to participate in activities and interact with people who they would not usually interact with disrupt their familiar social circles. Other characteristics of camp also seemed to provide a disruption from the concerns of teenagers’ lives.

5.4.3 Camp provides a disruption from other concerns of life

Camp also provides a temporary ‘disruption’ to the lives of students which allows them to forget their usual concerns and worries from home and school. This was possible because of the absence of things and people that are present in their urban environment. For example, Florence (Pewsey Vale) said that at camp she was able to relax and have fun, rather than focusing on her recent examinations, and Margaret (Athens Academy) explained that she thought people were different on camp because “they don’t have anything, all their stuff that they normally have like phones with them, iPods and they don’t have their parents round. Especially that, and other people that influence them to do other stuff. That makes quite a difference.”

With the exception of Jon’s (Pewsey Vale) comment regarding labelled clothing above (see Section 5.4.1), this theme was only evident among accounts from female students. For example, Jessica (Athens Academy) explained that when her group was participating in the mud run activity it was good to “not worry about what you look like and stuff.” In a similar vein, both Gretchen (Pewsey Vale) and Jayne (Athens Academy) commented that it was different not having to wear make-up at camp. According to Harri (Pewsey Vale) not having to worry about one’s physical appearance was acceptable.
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...because everyone understands you know, that you’re outside, you know there’s not really much cosmetics and showers and stuff so they go, oh that’s ok she’s on camp, maybe [laughs]. Ummm...maybe they just, they’re having too much fun to worry about all that kind of stuff [Harri, Pewsey Vale].

In the case of Athens Academy students, the location of their camps prevented them from using mobile phones because there was no reception. Students viewed this constraint in positive terms because it meant that students were more focused on camp, rather than being distracted by their mobile phones.

It was really relaxing to see all the trees and the bush and stuff and just being out in the middle of nowhere pretty much. And yeah...it was good not having cellphone coverage cause it meant not everyone was like, not texting and just like enjoying other things and not concentrating on that [texting and their mobile phones], so yeah...[Caitlan, Athens Academy].

It was quite good that we had no phone reception...because that was, it was all focused on camp and being at camp, rather than what was happening at home or whatever, so it was quite good. It was secluded in the middle of nowhere (laughs) [Grace, Athens Academy].

Again, students compared the lack of mobile phones to their situation at school (or back in the city) and they linked it to their capacity to focus on camp and to interact with their peers.

Well, yeah instead of cause most people have their phones in their pockets texting all the time, instead of doing that most people just you know talked to other people kind of got involved in what was going on and listening to the instructors more probably, right attention and yeah probably learnt more without phones [Grace, Athens Academy].

Just like, when you’re in school you can text like someone else and just be like not listening to the people around you, but when you’re at camp you might not have any reception, so you’d be like sitting around with people just talking and you just realise stuff about them that you are like oh my [gosh] I didn’t even know that and then you just kind of like, cause I made friends with Sue and I pretty much, and I talk to her sometimes, but I just don’t like talk to her much. But now I’m like really hey and she’s like hey [too]. Yeah [Stacey, Athens Academy].

Interestingly, in their discussions of the ways in which camp provided a different environment, students did not refer to the physical or outdoor environment as contributing to this novel environment. When talking about the natural environment, some students referred to the aesthetic qualities of the setting.

I thought the whole setting of camp was just so beautiful and so lovely to look at [Florence, Pewsey Vale].
Other students referred to the built environment and the ways in which it contributed to the social experience of camp by encouraging community and social interaction.

It [the place] was good yeah, ummm.....yeah the facilities were good and ummm.....oh it would have been cooler to have had like smaller bunkrooms cause like everyone was getting annoyed at people talking and then ummm...but that’s good people settled down again. Yeah it had decent room outside that you could sit and talk to people kind of thing [Maureen, Athens Academy].

I think it was quite cool, just like all the wee huts [bunkrooms] around the like the grass bit in the middle, yeah [Stephen, Pewsey Vale].

…I think it was really cool just the way it [the camp] was set up cause everything just kind of came out into the one area and so people would just go there and hang out and somebody else would come along and sit down and talk and it was just kind of like a community place. Just like an area where everyone could be together, which was cool [Lilli, Pewsey Vale].

5.5 Chapter summary

Students’ photographs elicited narratives depicting school camp as a ‘fun experience’, a ‘social experience’ and a ‘different experience.’ Central to each of these themes was the presence of students’ peers. Not surprisingly, then, students articulated a strong social purpose to school camp and this was further reinforced by the ways in which students discussed their participation in the outdoor activities, their enjoyment of which seemed to be underpinned by the knowledge that they were participating with their friends and classmates. Interestingly, students’ accounts rarely included reference to the outdoor environment in which camp was held. This does not mean that these aspects of camp (activities and the outdoor environment) were unimportant; instead, it suggests that these students were acutely aware of the unique social environment created at camp. Their preoccupation with social interaction might be a reflection of the wider socio-psychological and cultural context of young people today.33

Moreover, the school camp context was perceived as an environment where people were more ‘real’ because of a lessening of the norms and expectations that students are subject to at school. In this different environment, social interaction with a diverse group of peers was not only appreciated, but also seemed to be more acceptable.

The next chapter, Chapter Six, presents the results obtained from the photo-statements that students completed at the conclusion of their interview. At the conclusion of Chapter Six, a short comparative summary between the interview and photo-statement results will be given.

33 See Chapter Seven, Section 7.4 for a more detailed discussion.
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Chapter Six

WHAT IS SCHOOL CAMP? – INSIGHTS FROM YEAR 10 STUDENTS: PHOTO-STATEMENT RESULTS

In the previous chapter, the results from the photo-elicitation interviews were presented in terms of three dominant themes: ‘camp as fun’; ‘camp as social interaction’; and ‘camp as difference’. At the conclusion of their interviews, respondents were asked to complete five photo-statements and match one of their photographs to each statement. This chapter presents the results from those written statements. In total, 158 photo-statements were analysed in five groups. The five groups were

1) “This is my favourite photo from camp because……”
2) “What I liked most at camp was……because……”
3) “This photo from camp makes me feel……because……”
4) “This photo of……shows what camp was like for me best because……”
5) “What I liked least about camp was……because……”

Each group comprised 32 statements with the exception of group two (“What I liked most about camp”) in which only 30 statements were included because two respondents did not complete the statement sufficiently.

The first four groups of statements demonstrated a common set of nine major themes. An ‘other’ category was also created to enable classification of themes that were present in some statements but that did not occur frequently enough to warrant an independent theme. In the case of the fifth group (“What I liked least about camp”), which was analysed separately, seven dominant themes emerged. A generalised kappa statistic was used to calculate the level of agreement between the three raters who analysed the statements in terms of the presence or absence of each theme. The inter-rater agreement is documented below and then the results from each photo-statement group are presented.

6.1 Inter-rater agreement

Using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) macro developed by David Nichols (King, 2004), a generalised kappa statistic was calculated to determine the level of

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34 For further discussion, see Chapter Four.
35 See Chapter Four, Section 4.4.2, footnote 28 for detail regarding David Nichols SPSS macro.
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inter-rater agreement regarding the presence or absence of the nine themes identified by the researcher in the first four groups of statements.\textsuperscript{36} The results are reported in Table 2 (below).

Table 2: Inter-rater agreement regarding the presence or absence of themes in photo-statement data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Kappa statistic</th>
<th>Z-Value</th>
<th>( p &lt; )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1 = Favourite</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 = Liked most</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3 = Makes me feel</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4 = What camp was like for me</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Landis and Koch (1977) provide useful benchmarks for evaluating the strength of agreement indicated by the kappa statistic. They suggest that a kappa of 0.00-0.40 indicates poor to fair agreement, 0.41-0.80 = moderate to substantial agreement and > 0.81 = almost perfect. Thus, the kappa statistics calculated for the four photo-statement groups indicate better than moderate agreement amongst the three raters regarding the presence and absence of the themes. The \( p \)-values (< 0.01) show that these results are reliable.

Table 3 (p. 84) presents the definitions of the common themes which were present in the first four photo-statement groups. Then, the results from each photo-statement group are presented. Bar charts are used to compare the occurrence of each theme in the statements completed by the two groups of students (Pewsey Vale and Athens Academy). The results from the fifth group ‘What I liked least about camp was’ are also presented. Examples of students’ photo-statements and photographs are given to illustrate the results described. All quotations are presented verbatim to preserve the ‘students’ voices’ as much as possible.

\textsuperscript{36} Only the first four statement groupings were subjected to this analysis. See Chapter Four, Section 4.4.2 for justification of this decision.
Part C: Results

Table 3: Explanations of the main themes occurring in photo-statements about school camp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>The statement contains reference to a particular activity that the respondent did at camp. These activities may be of a formal nature (e.g., technical/instructed activities such as a high ropes course) or an informal nature (e.g., sports that were played during free-time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togetherness</td>
<td>The statement articulates some notion of a group or community. These people may or may not be described as ‘friends’. The key concept here is being with people or ‘togetherness’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections with others</td>
<td>The statement includes reference to developing relationships with peers, such as getting to know other people better or being able to ‘bond’. These people may or may not be described as ‘friends’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/enjoyment/good times</td>
<td>The statement contains expressions of fun, enjoyment, good times or similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discovery</td>
<td>The statement includes reference to incidents that could be considered personal development of the student. This personal development may be driven by interactions with peers or achievement through challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor environment</td>
<td>The statement includes reference to the outdoors, nature or some other aspect of the physical/natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>The student includes an element of reminiscing or remembering in their statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>The statement refers to a ‘funny’ or ‘random’ situation that was humorous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>The statement refers to times on camp which can be considered free-time, as opposed to time when students were engaged in formal organised activities (e.g., high ropes, abseiling). These times allowed students to ‘hang-out’ or spend time with peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Any other themes that are present, but do not occur frequently enough to warrant a separate theme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 **S1: “This is my favourite photograph from camp because…”**

This group of statements comprised 32 individual statements: 21 from Pewsey Vale and 11 from Athens Academy. Figure 7 (below) shows the relative occurrence of the themes for each school (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy □).

![Figure 7: Themes present in photo-statements “This is my favourite photo from camp because…”](image)

In the case of Pewsey Vale students, the most commonly given explanation for a photograph being their favourite was because it depicted the ‘fun’ they had had (47.6%). The second most commonly given reason was ‘togetherness’ (38.1%). In the case of Athens Academy students, however, the two dominant themes were ‘togetherness’ (72.7%) and ‘activity’ (63.6%), with ‘fun’ (54.5%) being the third most commonly given reason. Three statements and one photograph (Figure 8, p. 86) are given by way of examples.

*Themes: Togetherness/Connections with others/Self-discovery*

This is my favourite photo from camp because it shows how people relate with one another and there (*sic*) sense of community. These are people not looking there (*sic*) best. It shows that you don’t need material things to be who you are. Just people who you love [Ethel, Pewsey Vale].
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Themes: Togetherness/Fun
This is my favourite photo of camp because it has lots of my [class] friends in it. It is a photo of nearly all the people from my cabin and being in our cabin was fun [Alana, Pewsey Vale].

Themes: Activity/Togetherness/Fun
This is my favourite photo from camp because it shows a group of my friends having fun doing an activity that we all enjoyed [Grace, Athens Academy].

Figure 8: An example of a photograph depicting ‘Togetherness’, ‘Connections with others’ and ‘Self-discovery’.

6.3 S2: “What I liked most at camp was...because...”
This group of statements comprised 30 individual statements: 19 Pewsey Vale and 11 Athens Academy (two Pewsey Vale students did not sufficiently complete the statement). The content of the photographs chosen by students to illustrate ‘What I liked most about camp’ was exemplified by two major elements: being with people and activity. A third element, ‘free-time’, was also evident in statements on the part of Pewsey Vale students. Figure 9 (p. 87) shows the elements students used to describe their photographs (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy ■). Figure 10 (p. 87) presents the relative percentages of the themes present in this group of statements (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy ■).
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Figure 9: Elements students used to describe photographs for the statement “What I liked most at camp was…because…”

Figure 10: Themes present in photo-statements “What I liked most about camp was…because…”
What Pewsey Vale students liked most about school camp was ‘connecting with others’ (42.1%) and the ‘fun’ (42.1%) they had. The dominant themes which emerged from the Athens Academy students’ statements were ‘fun’ (63.6%) and ‘togetherness’ (45.5%), followed by ‘connections with others’ (36.7%). Three of the least commonly occurring themes for both schools were outdoor environment, memory and humour. Three example statements and one photograph (Figure 11, below) of “what I liked most about camp” were…

Themes: Togetherness/Fun
…having everyone together because it was one last chance to do something fun together [Jessica, Athens Academy].

Themes: Connections with others
……hanging out with friends because it was good to get to know them better [Tom, Pewsey Vale].

Themes: Togetherness/Connections with others/Fun
……sitting on the tables and singing because it was great to socialise and meet people from other classes [Florence, Pewsey Vale].

Figure 11: An example of a photograph which elicited a statement containing notions of ‘Togetherness’ and ‘Fun’.

6.4 S3: “This photograph from camp makes me feel…because…”
This group comprised 32 individual statements: 21 Pewsey Vale and 11 Athens Academy. A variety of emotions were articulated by respondents. However, the majority of emotions were positive. Figure 12 (p. 89) shows the emotions expressed by students (Pewsey Vale and
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Athens Academy, and Figure 13 (p. 89) presents the results regarding the presence of each theme in this group of statements (Pewsey Vale and Athens Academy).

Figure 12: Emotions articulated by students through the photo-statement “This photograph from camp makes me feel...because...”

Figure 13: Themes present in photo-statements “This photograph from camp makes me feel...because...”
The most common emotion chosen by students (total sample and in individual school groupings) to describe how their photograph made them feel was ‘happy’, with 47% of respondents using this term. Just over one-fifth of respondents (22%) used the phrase “This photograph makes me feel like laughing because…” Four (13%) Pewsey Vale students used ‘proud’ or brave’ and seven (21.9%) respondents used some other emotion in their statement. These other emotions were recorded only once each. They were: “satisfied and knowledgeable”, “really sympathetic”, “close to mates”, “really ‘ewww’ (sic) and gross”, “relaxed”, “sad” and “glad”.

‘Self-discovery’ (33.3%) and ‘fun’ (33.3%) were the dominant themes in Pewsey Vale students’ interpretations of their photographs, followed by ‘humour’ (23.8%) and ‘togetherness’ (23.8%). In the case of Athens Academy students, emotions were mainly related to the fact that the image reminded them of their time at camp, which was usually described as being fun or enjoyable. ‘Fun’ (54.5%) was the most dominant theme expressed, followed by ‘memory’ (19.0%). Three representative statements and two photographs (Figure 14, below and Figure 15, p. 91) were…

Themes: Connections with others/Self-discovery
……..happy because it shows I can get along really well with people I never thought I would have [Jon, Pewsey Vale].

Themes: Togetherness/Fun
……sad and happy because it’s one of the last times our class will be together, but it was heaps of fun [Grace, Athens Academy].

Figure 14: An example of a photograph which elicited a statement containing notions of ‘Connections with others’ and ‘Self-discovery’. 
Part C: Results

Themes: Self-discovery/Fun
…..really ‘eww’ (sic) and gross because we didn’t wear make-up but that was quite fun in its self (sic) [Gretchen, Pewsey Vale].

Figure 15: An example of a photograph which elicited a statement containing notions of ‘Togetherness’ and ‘Fun’.

6.5 S4: “This photograph of...shows what camp was like for me best because...”

This group of statements comprised 32 individual statements: 21 Pewsey Vale and 11 Athens Academy. People dominated the content of the photographs chosen by students to match to their “shows what camp was like for me best” statement and this was reflected in the descriptions they wrote. Students from both schools primarily described their photographs in terms of the people they depicted. Figure 16 (p. 92) shows how students chose to describe their photographs by school (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy □). Twenty-two students (68.7%) described their photograph in terms of the people it depicted. Over half of these students (63.6%) included themselves in the description through statements such as “our group” or “my friends”. Fourteen students (43.8%) included an activity aspect in their description.

Figure 17 (p. 92) presents the results regarding the presence of themes in this group of statements (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy □). The most common reason given by Pewsey Vale students was because camp was ‘fun’ (71.4%). The second most common reason was ‘togetherness’ (42.9%). In the case of Athens Academy students, the dominant themes were the same, but reversed in rank: ‘togetherness’ (90.9%) and ‘fun’ (72.7%).
Part C: Results

Figure 16: Elements students used to describe photographs for the statement “This photograph of…shows what camp was like for me best because…”

Figure 17: Themes present in photo-statements “This photograph of…shows what camp was like for me best because…”
Three example statements and a photograph (Figure 18, below) of “This photo of…shows what camp was like for me best because…” are given below.

**Themes: Togetherness/Fun**
This photo of the mud run shows what camp was like for me best because everyone is smiling and having fun, that[‘s] what I feel camps about...☺ smiles ☺ (sic) [Maureen, Athens Academy].

**Themes: Togetherness/Fun/Freedom**
This photo of a group of us playing volleyball shows what camp was like for me best because it shows lots of people just hanging out having fun TOGETHER [Lilli, Pewsey Vale, emphasis in original].

**Themes: Togetherness/Fun**
This photo of Grant smiling shows what camp was like for me best because it shows we were having a good time [Michael, Pewsey Vale].

![Figure 18: An example of a photograph which elicited a statement containing notions of ‘Togetherness’ and ‘Fun’.

6.6 S5: “What I liked least about camp was...because...”
There was much diversity in the student responses regarding what they liked least about camp. However, some consistent themes did emerge. These themes were markedly different to those that arose in the previous four statements. These themes are shown and defined in Table 4 (p. 94). Figure 19 (p. 94) compares the occurrence of each theme in students’ statements by school (Pewsey Vale ■ and Athens Academy ■).
Table 4: Explanations of the themes occurring in statements relating to what students liked least about school camp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving</td>
<td>The aspect the student liked least about camp was leaving or going home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes/behaviour</td>
<td>The aspect of camp that the student liked least was related to the disposition or behaviour of other people. These other people may have been peers or teachers on camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental conditions</td>
<td>The aspect of camp that the student liked least was related to environmental conditions. These conditions may have been in the physical/natural environment or the built environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>The aspect of camp that the student liked least was either an activity or some aspect of an activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>The aspect of camp that the student liked least was either having to get up early or having to go to bed early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>The aspect of camp that the student liked least was some aspect of having to clean the camp facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing out</td>
<td>The aspect of camp the student liked least was a situation whereby they were unable to do something they were expecting to be able to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19: Themes present in photo-statement “What I liked least about camp was…because…”
The most frequently occurring theme on the part of Pewsey Vale students in relation to what they liked least about camp was ‘activity’ (23.8%). The primary reason for this was that an activity or an aspect of an activity was ‘boring’. For example, Kenny wrote “What I liked least about camp was waiting for the abseiling because it was boring.” The attitudes and behaviour of other people on camp (19.0%) and having to leave camp or go home (19.0%) were also some of the least liked aspects of camp.

**Themes: Leaving/Going home**
What I liked least about camp was going home because it was only 3 days and it went really quickly. I really enjoyed camp and didn’t want to go home yet [Peter, Pewsey Vale].

**Themes: Attitudes/behaviour**
What I liked least about camp was the teachers not being as approachable as I would’ve hoped because I really like our teachers and enjoy being able to talk outside of the classroom [Cypris, Pewsey Vale].

In the case of Athens Academy students, however, the most common theme related to ‘What I liked least about camp’ was the environmental conditions (45.5%); in particular, the sandflies. Mary Ann wrote “What I liked least about camp was the bugs because the[y] ate me and I got ichy (sic) bites “Scratch Scratch.”

### 6.7 Chapter summary

Results from students’ photo-statements show that for the most part, school camp was a positive and fun experience. This is evident because the theme ‘fun’ was either the first or the second most frequently occurring theme for both schools in each of the first four groups of statements (with the exception of the Athens Academy statements in group one – “This is my favourite photo” – where ‘fun’ was ranked third). The results also depict school camp as being primarily a social experience. This was shown by the fact that social themes of ‘togetherness’ or ‘connections with others’ were the two most frequently occurring themes in three of the statement groups. The ways in which students described their photographs, largely in terms of the people depicted, reinforced this emphasis on the social. It was also reinforced by the relative absence of photographs depicting solely the natural environment. In fact, when considering the first four groups of photo-statements, just four students chose images portraying the natural environment to match one of their statements. The themes from the fifth statement group (“What I liked least about camp was…because…”) differed markedly from those that were evident in the first four statement groups.
6.8 Comparison of interview and photo-statement results

The results from both the photo-elicitation interviews and photo-statements portray camp as a positive social experience. Both data collection methods revealed that the concept of ‘fun’ is integral to the student experience of school camps. The ‘camp as social interaction’ theme is supported by ‘connections with others’ and ‘togetherness’ which emerged as the dominant themes from the photo-statement data. The outdoor environment did not feature prominently in either the students’ verbal accounts or photo-statements.

‘Camp as difference’, however, primarily emerged through the interview analysis and was not as strongly represented in the photo-statement data. Consequently, the few photo-statements that did exhibit notions of ‘camp as difference’ were included in the ‘other’ category. Nevertheless, the aspects of camp which these statements identified as being different were consistent with the findings from the interview data. Three examples are provided below.

*Notions of ‘being more real’ which facilitated relationship development*

What I liked most about camp was being able to bond with mates because you could act natural with everyone and create stronger relationships [Jon, Pewsey Vale].

This photo from camp shows what camp was like for me best because everyone is relaxing and is themselves. These are 3 people that (sic) generally don’t like each other so to see them together is good [Ethel, Pewsey Vale].

*Distraction from concerns of everyday life*

This photograph from camp makes me feel like laughing because I’ve never seen my friends without make-up on [Jayne, Athens Academy].

The following two chapters of this thesis (Part D) provide a discussion of the research results reported here.
PART D: DISCUSSION

Having presented the results from the individual photo-elicitation interviews in the previous two chapters, the thesis now moves to the discussion of these results in relation to the research objectives established in Chapter One. Part D comprises two chapters. Chapter Seven addresses the first research objective and discusses the results within the context of the current outdoor education literature, much of which was reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Eight addresses the second research objective and critically evaluates the use of photo-elicitation interviewing as a research method to investigate the outdoor experiences of young people.
Chapter Seven

REFLECTION ON THE WAYS IN WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE ‘SCHOOL CAMPS’

This chapter discusses the findings of this study within the context of the current theoretical and empirical literature, and its primary purpose is to address the first research objective: to explore the ways in which New Zealand secondary school students experience a school-based outdoor education programme called ‘school camp’. Before beginning the discussion, it must be noted that the results presented in the previous chapters do not represent the school camp experience of “some nonexisting average” Year 10 student, but they do provide a detailed understanding of actual individuals’ experiences at school camp (Shafer, 1969; cited in Patterson et al., 1998, p. 430). It is not possible, then, to draw conclusions about the extent to which these experiences represent the experiences of all students who attended these camps. Given the exploratory and more participant-driven approach used, though, the results do provide insight into what school camp is from the perspective of the student.

The framework used throughout the following discussion of the ways in which students experienced school camp is derived from two sources. First, the overall structure originates from three aspects of outdoor education commonly discussed in the literature: greater understanding of (or connections with) self, of others and of the environment (Hales, 2006; Loeffler, 2004b). This three-fold purpose is applicable to the discussion here because it is encapsulated in the ‘official’ purpose of outdoor education in New Zealand. In New Zealand, “[o]utdoor education provides students with opportunities to develop personal [greater understanding of self] and social skills [greater understanding of others], to become active, safe, and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the environment [greater understanding of the environment]” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46). Despite this ‘official’ three-fold purpose, from the students’ perspective, school camp primarily served as a means to promote greater understanding of others, that is, social skill development, compared with which promoting a greater understanding of self and of the environment are not as salient.

The second source is McKenzie’s (2003) revised model of the Outward Bound process.37 Although her model (and Walsh and Golins’ original model) was developed for understanding

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37 See Figure 1 in Chapter Two, p. 21.
the processes of student learning within outdoor programmes, its utility in the present
discussion results from the removal of the linear progression as originally proposed by Walsh
and Golins (1976). Instead, McKenzie modelled the learning process as consisting of five
components – physical environment, social environment, course activities, service and
instructors – all of which were linked more directly to the reflection and learning components
of outdoor programmes. Four of these components directly relate to the school camp context
investigated in this study (the exception is the ‘service’ component as this was unique to the
Outward Bound programme in McKenzie’s study, and was not part of the school camps
investigated here). This multi-dimensional approach makes it more applicable to
understanding student experience because it allows different components of the process to be
emphasised at different times and by different individuals, rather than requiring the process to
proceed sequentially. As the discussion proceeds, each of these components will be discussed
in terms of the student experiences reported in this thesis.

Using these two sources, the results will be discussed within the context of the outdoor
education literature. The discussion will end by considering the broader social-psychological
and cultural context of young people today. This chapter is organised into four sections:
greater understanding of others; greater understanding of self; greater understanding of the
environment; and the wider social-psychological and cultural context of young people today.

Previous studies have revealed that outdoor practitioners and programme participants value
different aspects of adventure programmes (Witman, 1995). In light of this, and the subjective
nature of experience, the ability of outdoor education practitioners to construct outdoor
programmes to achieve certain experiences for all participants is questionable. It seems, then,
that the adult-intended purposes of outdoor programmes might differ from the actual
experiences of individual youth participants. This does not imply that the adult-determined
purposes of outdoor programmes go unrealised, but that students might report different
experiences from those intended. To an extent, the camp experiences reported in this thesis
are consistent with the ‘official’ purposes of outdoor education articulated by the Ministry of
Education and the students’ teachers, but in some respects they differ. From the perspective of
the students in this study, school camp is primarily an opportunity to have an enjoyable
experience together with their peers and to develop peer relationships in the unique
environment that is school camp.
Staff from both schools wanted students to enjoy camp. Acknowledgement of outdoor programmes as being ‘fun’ is, however, notably absent from the outdoor education literature (McKenzie, 2003). Despite this absence in the literature, school camp as an enjoyable experience was consistently reiterated throughout students’ verbal accounts and written statements. This finding reminds outdoor educators of the importance which young people place on enjoying themselves, and when considered alongside the results of McKenzie’s (2003) study, which suggest that ‘having fun’ is integral to achieving course outcomes, camp as an enjoyable experience should not be taken for granted. Simply enjoying an outdoor programme might be a necessary foundation for all reflection and learning that students might accrue. In addition, enjoying camp might have resulted in students perceiving camp as an end-of-year reward. Both schools, however, did not specifically view camp in this way and the timing of the camps at the end of the year was more a result of convenience rather than planning.

It is encouraging to find students enjoying outdoor education programmes. As is the case with previous studies, the majority of camp experiences reported by students were positive, and few students raised any ‘negative’ experiences. As discussed in Chapter Two, however, it seems unlikely that all students experience outdoor education programmes so positively. Furthermore, the need to consider experiences of outdoor education programmes not currently reported in the literature, even ‘negative’ ones, has been acknowledged (see, for example, Ewert, 1987; Gordon & Dodunski, 1999). Although the photo-statement ‘What I liked least about camp’ elicited responses from students concerning what they disliked about camp, the difficulty with which students identified an aspect of camp they did not like is also encouraging. In addition, students’ responses to this statement do not seem to be ‘negative’ in the sense that they might have a detrimental effect on individuals. Two accounts from students’ interviews, however, might be considered ‘negative’ experiences. Cypris’ (Pewsey Vale) and Margaret’s (Athens Academy) comments regarding their interactions with their teachers support the findings of Gordon and Dodunski (1999) that outdoor education programmes can produce negative experiences.

While the camp experiences captured in this study can be considered representative of the sample, other students might have experienced camp in quite different ways to those reported here. For some, school camp may have been a lonely place, a threatening place, or a waste of
This study reiterates earlier studies (Gordon & Dodunski, 1999) by noting that the challenge for the outdoor education research community is to investigate the prevalence of these negative experiences and the impact they have on participants. To this end, obtaining personal accounts through in-depth interviews (using participant photography or otherwise) of outdoor experiences may not be the most effective method if a self-selection sampling procedure is used. Students who choose to participate in such studies might hold positive attitudes about camp prior to attending and, therefore, might be more likely to respond to researchers’ invitations. In comparison, students who perceive camp less favourably might report different camp experiences to those reported in this thesis, but they might also be more reluctant to volunteer their participation in studies of this kind. With consideration for ethical issues when working with young people, researchers could usefully explore ways of randomly selecting respondents and then invite their participation in future qualitative studies.

Nevertheless, the students in this study enjoyed their time at school camp. Their narratives concerning school camp as a ‘fun experience’ indicate that their enjoyment was primarily determined by the social experience it afforded them. In this way, school camp is an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of others.

### 7.1 Greater understanding of others

Certainly it seems that outdoor education programmes provide opportunities to promote relationships and a greater understanding of others. Previous studies have used the following terms to describe these processes: ‘connections with others through outdoor experience’ (Loeffler, 2004a, 2005), ‘fitting in and getting on’ (Lynch, 2000), and ‘promoting positive relationships’ (Gordon & Dodunski, 1999).

Students in this study primarily highlighted the social experience school camp afforded them; a finding which is consistent with previous studies which have reported the social experiences of outdoor education programme participants (see, for example, Loeffler, 2004a, 2005).

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38 The following quote was gleaned from a thesis investigating the lived experiences of Taiwanese students living in America. “I heard outdoor ed (sic) was supposed to be the best time. I went with fear. It seemed like everyone was having a great time, but I had no one to talk to, no one to play with or who wanted to play with me. It was as if I went on this trip alone all by myself and not with 150 of my classmates. While they wrote in their journals in English, I wrote in Chinese about how foreign and depressing this trip was” (OuYang, 2004, p. 190).

39 An alternative explanation relates to the use of cameras to generate photographic stimuli and will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, Section 8.2.
Lynch, 2000; Witman, 1995). When considered alongside Witman’s (1995) study, which found that four of the six most highly valued characteristics of adventure programmes by participants were relational in nature, it certainly seems as if participants primarily value outdoor education in terms of social interaction opportunities. This finding is encouraging because these social experiences reported by students are consistent with the broader aims of outdoor education – to promote social skills – according to the Ministry of Education. In terms of the specific camps in which students participated during this study, Pewsey Vale staff sought to provide an opportunity for students to develop a greater understanding of others. Specifically, the school wanted to prepare students for their senior high school years by designing a camp programme that provided students opportunities to interact with peers with whom they may not have had much contact before. The students also understood camp in terms of this social rationale. Their understanding of camp as a means to promote social interaction was so strong that they could understand why their school has chosen to discontinue Year 10 camp because they considered social interaction opportunities to be more important at the beginning of Year 9 when people were less likely to know their peers well.

In comparison, Athens Academy staff did not have a specific social purpose for organising camp. Yet, like Pewsey Vale students, Athens Academy students also understood camp in terms of the social interaction opportunities it afforded them. This observation seems to reinforce school camp as being primarily a social experience, despite adult-intended purposes. Students’ emphasis on school camp as a social experience might be explained by the social preoccupations of adolescents today.  

According to McKenzie’s Outward Bound Process model, the social environment is a key component for student learning. Aspects of the social environment which contribute to this learning are the group size, conflict resolution, reciprocity and new roles (McKenzie, 2003). When discussing their social experience at camp, however, students in this study did not refer to any of these aspects. Instead, they highlighted the novelty of the social environment created at camp and contrasted it to the school environment to which they are usually accustomed.

The novelty of outdoor programmes has been reported in previous studies (Garst et al., 2001; Lynch, 2000). As a New Zealand based study of Year 7 and 8 camps, Lynch’s (2000) study is particularly relevant. Respondents in her study also reflected on the ways in which camp

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40 See Chapter Seven, Section 7.4 for a more in-depth discussion of this point.
differed from school, but their comparisons primarily focused on the way in which school was associated with ‘work’ and camp was associated with ‘fun’ and freedom’. Students in this present study also expressed notions of ‘fun’ and freedom concerning camp, but their preoccupation with social interaction caused students to compare camp to school in terms of camp encouraging people to ‘be more real’, and an environment where it is difficult to put up a façade. In comparison, school is an environment that allows and perhaps demands students to ‘present themselves’, which students attributed to being less ‘real’. Given the strength with which students perceive this dichotomy between school and camp, outdoor educators might consider facilitating outdoor experiences in such a way that students have opportunities to explore the implications of presenting themselves in different ways depending upon their context.

This different environment allowed students to be together for an intensive three-day residential experience in which they perceived changes in their peers’ behaviour. However, it may not have been that people were different, but that students were simply able to view their peers from a different perspective because they were at camp as opposed to being at school. This dichotomy between school and camp is important. The outdoor programme explored in this study was ‘school camp’, that is, it was not school. For these students, school is a structured environment which is juxtaposed to the relative freedom of school camp. This juxtaposition of school and ‘school camp’ could have contributed to the dominance of the highly valued social experiences. Other camp contexts, such as Boy Scout, Girl Guide or youth group camps, may not represent such a stark dichotomy from a social perspective and, therefore, participants may be more aware of other aspects of those camps.

Nevertheless, the dichotomy created between students’ school environment and the camp environment resulted in students perceiving camp as a place in which people were more ‘real’. Students perceived their peers as being more ‘real’ on camp because they were away from their usual environment where it is easier to be ‘plastic’ or to put up a façade. It seems, then, that the perception of camp as being ‘different’ allowed students to relax and reconstruct group norms. In particular, expectations regarding outward appearance (e.g., lack of labelled clothing and make-up) and with whom it was appropriate to interact, changed. Thus, while students seem to have perceived school camp as forcing people to be themselves, or to be more ‘real’, the different environment may have simply enabled students to see their peers from a different perspective. If this is the case, students were not forced to be themselves, but were forced to see a ‘different side’ of people. In light of this, Lynch’s (2000) application of
Slater’s (1984) phrase ‘the temporary community’ to school camp, also seems applicable. That is, the event known as school camp creates a unique social environment or ‘temporary community’ where norms and expectations present in students’ normal environments (e.g., school) dissipate. This is comparable with Loeffler’s (2004b) conclusion that respondents “identified the outdoors as a unique container for developing friendships. The container is unusual in their lives because it provides a distraction-free environment, which allows for the pursuit of shared goals within a common experience” (p. 59). Students in this study also found camp to be a ‘unique container’, but their acknowledgement of the outdoors contributing to this ‘unique container’ was limited.

Another feature of note is that the social networking opportunities highly valued most by students were those that occurred during informal times. This seems to suggest that the characteristics of camp which are most conducive to facilitating social interaction are the residential nature of programmes and the relative freedom of camp compared with students’ usual school environment. These characteristics are briefly explored.

Part of the novelty of the camp environment was the residential nature of the camps. For these students, this was particularly crucial to their social experiences because they were able to ‘see’ their peers for longer periods of time than what school allowed. This serves as a reminder to teachers and outdoor education practitioners of one of the original foundations for the introduction of school camping to New Zealand’s schooling: school pupils living together. Today, however, schools are facing increasing financial pressures and this may be leading to a decrease in multi-day residential school camps as these more expensive programmes are ‘replaced’ by less costly, single-day programmes such as high ropes courses situated in urban environments, closer to schools. While there is no research to substantiate this claim, anecdotally a trend towards shorter outdoor education programmes seems to be occurring. For example, during the recruitment of schools for this study, it was found that several of the larger state schools in Christchurch either offered single-day outdoor education experiences to their Year 9 and 10 students, or no adventure pursuit-based outdoor education experiences. One of these state schools used to provide a residential camp for its Year 10 students, but due to a lack of resourcing in terms of finance and staff, and also the time and complex logistics of organising residential camps for large groups of students, the school no longer provides a camp. Furthermore, a senior instructor at one of the school camps in this study noted that, during his time at the outdoor education centre, an increasing number of schools were opting to shorten the duration of their camps – from five days to three days, for example. If there is a
tendency to provide shorter outdoor education programmes, especially non-residential ones, it is likely that the student experience of these would differ substantially from those reported here. During single-day experiences, students may not be given the same degree of freedom to socialise and, therefore, understandings of the self and/or environment may be more salient than understandings of others in these situations. Removing the residential nature of camp might be counterproductive to the social purposes of outdoor education.

The course activities are also considered to be integral to outdoor education programmes (McKenzie, 2003; Walsh & Golins, 1976). The camp experiences of the students in this study did include reference to the outdoor activities in which they participated. Although some students articulated notions of personal challenge and achievement when discussing the activities, these experiences were in the minority. For the majority of students, the course activities were another aspect of camp which contributed to the enjoyable and social experience. Valuing formal structured activities in terms of the social experience they create has several implications for outdoor educators and researchers. ‘Frontloading’ is an outdoor education facilitation technique often used by instructors to focus students learning during the activity. Instructors using this technique will explain the purposes and objectives of the given activity session prior to students completing the tasks. At the conclusion of the activity, the instructor and students discuss the activity session within the context of the objectives and purposes established at the beginning. Given the findings of this study, outdoor educators might usefully consider including or emphasising the social experience, rather than processes which are more individual in nature such as personal challenge. From a research perspective, researchers could conduct comparative studies of specific outdoor activities to investigate potential differences in the types of social experiences different activities might engender.

Adults were part of the social environment of school camp and performed two primary roles: as teachers and as instructors. Teachers appear to be an integral and highly valued part of the social experience at camp, especially for female students, but instructors featured infrequently in students’ accounts and photographs.

7.1.1 Interactions with instructors and teachers

The influence of instructors on the effectiveness of outdoor programmes has been the subject of much research (McKenzie, 2000). In addition, McKenzie’s (2003) study of the Outward Bound Process concluded that ‘instructors’ were a key component of the process and as such, she included them in her revised model. The camp experiences reported by students in this
study, however, included little reference to their instructors. Few students had any photographs of their instructors and any in-depth discussion of them was prompted by the researcher. It is perhaps unsurprising that Pewsey Vale students did not mention their instructors much because they participated in two-hour activities usually with a different instructor for each activity. This suggests that students may have perceived the instructors’ presence as only being necessary from the perspective of providing technical support. In the case of Athens Academy, however, a single instructor facilitated students’ entire camp experience; therefore, one might expect that if instructors were an important part of students’ experiences it would become evident in this context. In comparison to the invisibility of the instructors, students’ teachers were mentioned and some students viewed camp as an opportunity to interact with their teachers in a different context.

Developing student-teacher relationships has been one benefit of school camps which has been reiterated over the years. Lynch (2006) cites accounts of two school camps held in the 1930s and 1940s that refer to the way camps allow teachers and students to become better acquainted (see Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1). Lynch also incorporated this benefit into her definition of outdoor education as practiced in New Zealand. She wrote that the benefits of outdoor education are “recreational physical activity in non-urban, outdoor spaces; nature study; social interaction between young people and between adults (particularly teachers) and the young” (p. 11). Compared to studies investigating the influence of instructors, student-teacher interactions are rarely mentioned in the empirical literature. This characteristic of the literature might be a result of the number of programmes represented in the literature that are not positioned within the context of school. The students’ comments regarding their interactions with teachers captured by this study, then, offer insight into another aspect of the social experience these students considered important within a school-based outdoor education programme.

Both male and female students photographed and commented on the presence of their teachers at camp. Interestingly, though, the accounts of male and female students regarding their teachers differed. Female Pewsey Vale students appreciated the opportunity to interact with their teachers in a different context to that of school. In contrast, when male participants spoke about their teachers, they focused on the things their teachers prevented them from doing. This highlights the notion of experience as being subjective and indicates that there may be important differences in the ways male and female students experience different aspects of outdoor education programmes that are not currently explored in the literature.
Part D: Discussion

Conversely, sex differences that seem to be present for Pewsey Vale students in relation to expectations regarding teachers at camp are not strongly supported by the responses of Athens Academy students. Athens Academy students, although female, did not articulate a strong expectation that their teachers would be integral to their experience; and the number of photographs taken of teachers was correspondingly low. One potential explanation for this is the difference in camp organisation. The teachers on the Pewsey Vale camp were more involved in delivering camp activities than those teachers who attended the Athens Academy camps. Pewsey Vale students also had a greater amount of free time than did Athens Academy students. Both these aspects are likely to have facilitated increased student-teacher interaction. Although Athens Academy students did not articulate strong expectations to interact with their teachers at camp, reference to them in students’ photographs and interviews suggests that their presence was highly valued. The impact of teachers on students’ camp experiences is perhaps best illustrated by the fact two of the ‘negative’ camp experiences reported in this thesis resulted from the actions of teachers. Cypris (Pewsey Vale) was disappointed that she was not able to interact with her teachers as much as she hoped and Margaret (Athens Academy) felt her teachers were rude and judgemental. These examples serve as reminders to practitioners and teachers about the effects of their presence (or absence), and temperament on students’ camp experiences during outdoor education programmes.

7.2 Greater understanding of self

Studies reporting on greater understandings of the self (or personal development) dominate the outdoor education literature. The majority of these studies are quantitative and utilise researcher-derived instruments to investigate changes in psychometric outcomes (see, for example, Hattie et al., 1997; McLeod & Allen-Craig, 2007). In accordance with much of this empirical and theoretical literature, staff from both schools interpreted school camp in terms of the greater understandings of self that might be gained by students. In the case of Pewsey Vale, the intention was to provide students with challenging situations to put them outside their comfort zone, and in the case of Athens Academy, the intention was to provide students with opportunities to develop self-reliance, self-confidence, determination, initiative and calculated risk-taking. Students did not, however, articulate a strong personal development purpose. Instead, they spoke of doing new things and learning practical outdoor skills. These observations are similar to Stewart’s (2006/07) findings that what students learned during an outdoor education camp differed from what the students’ teacher thought they were learning.
Previous qualitative studies have found that students can reflect on their outdoor education experiences in terms of personal development outcomes. In her study of a Year 13 outdoor education programme, Davidson (2001) found that students valued their programme in terms of the opportunities they had to overcome challenges, build confidence and mental strength, and have the freedom to choose. In light of the findings from Davidson’s study, students’ lack of reference to instances of personal development requires further exploration. Three potential explanations will be discussed here: the research approach used; participant age; and camp characteristics.

7.2.1 Research approach
The first possible explanation relates to differences in the research approaches used. The approach used in this study was intended to be open-ended and participant-driven in order to avoid constraining participants’ responses regarding their camp experiences. The experiences articulated by respondents did not often focus on the psychological aspects of outdoor education presented in much of the quantitative literature. Experiences relating to personal development may well have been present, but responses reflected experiences which were highly valued by these students. It is these experiences that are emphasised when students are given a ‘blank slate’ to communicate their experiences rather than being queried about specific aspects. Had students been asked directly about psychometric outcomes such as increases in self-concept, they may have reported the presence of these outcomes.

7.2.2 Participant age
The second explanation recognises the participants’ age or life-stage. The participants in this study were three to four years younger than those in Davidson’s study; therefore, perhaps Year 10 students are not able to reflect in the same ways as older students. Although students interpreted school camp primarily as a social experience where they were able to ‘bond’ or get to know their peers better, it is possible that through these processes of social interaction, they were simultaneously achieving a greater understanding of themselves. Similarly, students also might have experienced increases in self-esteem and self-confidence by being ‘together’ and being part of the camp community. Yet for reasons relating to their maturity, it may have been the case that, at the time of their interview, they did not or could not interpret school camp as being a personal development experience.

7.2.3 Camp characteristics
School camps are just one part of a spectrum of outdoor education opportunities (Hammerman et al., 1994), thus, the fact that the outdoor programme in this study was
specifically ‘school camp’ and not some other programme may have influenced the experiences reported by students. Both camps were held during the final weeks of the school year and some students interpreted school camp as being a type of ‘reward’. This perception and the excitement associated with school terminating for the summer holidays might have heightened students’ euphoria regarding camp; and more serious aspects associated with personal development outcomes might have been at odds with students’ excitement at spending time with their friends and the forthcoming summer holidays. This might also explain the absence of comments regarding the ways in which students might transfer any learning from their camp experiences to their school and home environments.

7.3 Greater understanding of the environment

The outdoors is integral to outdoor education practice; yet current research is limited and inconclusive regarding the role of the physical or natural environment in outdoor programmes. Some studies report that the natural environment is an important aspect contributing to outdoor education programme effectiveness (Hattie et al., 1997; McKenzie, 2003; Walsh & Golins, 1976), while in other studies the role of the environment seems less important (Goldenberg et al., 2005). In recent years, researchers (particularly in Australia) have begun to explore the utility of outdoor education to develop human-nature relationships and educate for environmental sustainability (Martin, 1999, 2004; Stewart, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Thomas & Thomas, 2000). This approach to outdoor education has been termed the “greening of outdoor education” (Thomas, 2005, p. 31) or “critical outdoor education” (Martin, 1999, p. 464).

The teachers responsible for organising the camps attended by participants in this study did not articulate an environmental purpose. Perhaps it is to be expected, then, that students also did not attribute an environmental purpose to their participation. As was discussed near the beginning of the chapter and in the previous section, however, student experiences might differ from the adult-intended purposes of school camp. It is, therefore, possible that students might have expressed school camp in terms of an ‘outdoor experience’, but in fact this was not the case.

The physical or natural environment did not feature prominently in either students’ verbal accounts or their photographs of school camp. This finding suggests that students were largely unaware of the outdoor environment in which their school camp took place and may not consider important the outdoors as a place in itself. It also suggests that from the students’
perspective, a natural environment is not a prerequisite to achieving the social experience which they valued so highly. This finding challenges a central foundation of outdoor education: that an outdoor environment is integral to the outdoor education process.

In Walsh and Golin’s (1976) original model, the physical environment simply had to be a unique environment, but the authors argued that the outdoors was a preferred type of unique environment because it offered more educational opportunities than alternative environments. Similarly, in McKenzie’s (2003) revised model, the physical environment is also an outdoor one. The students in this study, however, seemed to perceive the uniqueness of their camp environment primarily from a social perspective, rather than acknowledging the uniqueness of their physical surroundings. Given the relative invisibility of the outdoors to these students, other suitably unique contexts such as marae or inner city urban environments potentially could provide similar social experiences. Outward Bound in the United Kingdom, for example, provides ‘City Challenge’ courses where participants work with disadvantaged inner city youth, rather than participating in expedition-type outdoor activities (Nichols, 2000). While no research could be found concerning these urban-based programmes, future investigation of participants’ experiences on such courses compared with the experiences of participants in outdoor courses, could contribute towards determining the role the outdoors does or does not play in outdoor education programmes. The Outward Bound example given above shows that using alternative environments is not a new idea; however, the student perspectives reported in this study might encourage outdoor educators who are seeking to promote social development to explore alternative sites for their programmes. The outcome of this process might be a broadening of how outdoor education is understood and practiced in New Zealand and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{41} Such a broadening would be consistent with the use of the term Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC), rather than being more narrowly used “to refer to adventure education and outdoor pursuits” (Haddock, 2007, p. 4).

Exploring alternative environments in which to provide students with opportunities for social experiences, however, must be evaluated in light of the (favourable) absence of ‘urban’ features in the outdoors identified by Athens Academy students, in particular their inability to use their mobile phones. These students made a direct link between their inability to use mobile phones imposed on them by the outdoor, non-urban environment and their highly valued camp social experience. Other contexts such as marae and inner city environments will

\textsuperscript{41} See Boyes (2000) for a discussion of the ‘narrowing’ of outdoor education in New Zealand.
not necessarily impose the same restrictions on mobile phone use and may detract from the social experience that potentially could be engendered simply by students being together (as was identified by respondents in this study). Students’ discussion of the impact of mobile phones on their camp experience is of particular relevance given recent literature (Hales, 2006).

According to Hales (2006), the use of mobile phones by young people could promote processes of individualisation that directly challenge the broader goals of outdoor education which involve promoting a greater understanding of self, others and the environment. Within this context, Hales proposed an alternative way to achieve these goals through outdoor programmes. He advocated the use of mobile phones as a means to discuss processes of individualisation and the associated implications for relationships with self, others and environment. He also argued that simply banning mobile phones could be counterproductive because such action could render outdoor programmes irrelevant to young people. In the study reported here, mobile phones were not ‘banned’ at either camp; although, Pewsey Vale students were discouraged from taking their phones and there was no mobile reception available at the Athens Academy camp. The lack of reception at the Athens Academy camp seems to have distinguished school camp from students’ usual urban environment, rendering it ‘unique’. Consequently, the impact which mobile phones have on peer relationships became particularly salient for Athens Academy students. While the exclusion of mobile phone access at this camp was not intentional, Hales’ concern that outdoor programmes could become irrelevant if the issue of mobile phones was not proactively addressed seems to be unfounded. None of the Athens Academy students viewed the absence of mobile phones as detracting from their camp experience. In fact, the absence of mobile phones seemed to be acknowledged as important in enabling them to interact with others and see a different side to their peers. Given that mobile phones are an integral part of teenage identity (Hales, 2006), an environment which restricts mobile phone use through lack of reception might be fundamental to the positive reflections expressed by these students. Had mobile phone access been solely restricted by teachers, students’ reflections might not have been as positive. In light of these observations, then, outdoor practitioners might consider other ways in which outdoor programmes could be contrasted with important aspects of teenage culture.

It must be recognised, however, that the students’ relative neglect of the natural environment neither renders the outdoors as unimportant to school camps (or outdoor programmes), nor does it suggest that the outdoors fails to contribute to the students’ social experience of camp.
Instead, it simply suggests that the students were largely unaware of it. In light of this observation, the outdoors might have been integral (as the mobile phone example illustrates) to the students’ school camp experience, but for a number of reasons was not salient to this group of respondents.

Given the centrality of the outdoors to outdoor programmes, potential explanations for this apparent disregard of the natural environment need to be considered. There are a number of potential explanations, some environmental, some procedural and some developmental (life-stage). Each will be discussed.

### 7.3.1 Environmental explanations

When ‘experience’ is conceptualised as contextual (see Chapter Two, Section 2.5), a variety of camp characteristics could have influenced the experiences reported by these students and contributed to their neglect of the natural environment. In the case of Pewsey Vale students, perhaps their lack of awareness of the outdoor environment is unsurprising because their camp was held in a semi-rural area and may not represent a significant contrast to students’ usual urban environment. If this was the case, the outdoors might be expected to be more salient in the camp experiences of Athens Academy students because their camp was held in a more remote, wilderness location. This was not the case, however. While Athens Academy students highlighted the absence of urban features such as mobile phones, like Pewsey Vale students, they did not directly articulate school camp in terms of an outdoor experience.

Another camp characteristic that might influence students’ awareness of their natural surroundings is the weather. Although not widely discussed in the literature, the weather has been shown to influence course outcomes (McKenzie, 2003). For the duration of the camps attended by students in this study, the weather was fine and might have contributed to the largely positive experiences reported. Had the weather been inclement, students’ awareness of the outdoor environment might have been heightened and their experiences differed accordingly. It is also notable that both camps were held at a time of year when the weather tends to be more settled; however, this timing was more incidental than deliberate on the part of the schools. The experiences students reported also might have been influenced by some of the procedures adopted in this study.

### 7.3.2 Procedural explanations

The data reported here were collected in the two weeks following students’ participation in school camp, so their reflections were relatively immediate. It is possible that, due to the
excitement of ‘camp’, this relatively short time-frame did not allow participants enough time to reflect on the more subtle, less immediate aspects of camp, of which the environment may have been one. In accordance with the conceptualisation of ‘experience’ used in this thesis – that interpretations and, therefore, experiences change over time (see Chapter Two, Section 2.5) – had students been interviewed later, the environment may have emerged as a more integral part of the school camp experience. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that students continue to reflect on their outdoor education experiences long after the event. Teachers from both schools which participated in this study, for example, commented that during their senior years at high school, students often recalled and reflected upon their time at Year 10 camp. Furthermore, Davidson (2001) was informed by a teacher-respondent that it was often years later that students contacted their teacher and encouraged them to continue teaching outdoor education. To date, exploration of the ways in which participants’ outdoor education experiences change over time is limited. It would seem, then, that outdoor education researchers would do well to invest in longitudinal studies to assess potential changes in the ways students experience outdoor education programmes.

An additional procedural explanation relates to the inclusion of cameras to generate photographic stimuli. This issue will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Eight. The following section recognises the potential influence of participants’ life-stage on the outdoor experiences they report – notably the relative ‘absence’ of the natural/physical environment in the school camp experiences reported by these students and will be developed further in Section 7.4.

7.3.3 A developmental (life-stage) explanation
Studies investigating the meaning of outdoor experience involving older participants have shown that outdoor experiences facilitate participant-environment relationships (see, for example, Arnould & Price, 1993; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002; Loeffler, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Participants in those studies, however, were older than the participants in the study reported here, while previous studies investigating the effectiveness of outdoor programmes have suggested that participant age is a determining factor (Hattie et al., 1997). Consequently, the younger age of these participants possibly influenced the ways in which they acknowledged the outdoor environment. The outdoors might have been integral to the students’ camp experience, but because of their younger age they were not able to appreciate it in the ways reported in other studies.
Understanding the ways in which participant age might influence outdoor experiences is particularly pertinent to discourses relating to ‘critical outdoor education’. Some researchers have suggested that traditional adventure pursuits are at odds with the aims of critical outdoor education to develop improved human-nature relationships (Lugg, 2004; Thomas, 2005). These theoretical concerns were challenged in a study which sought to establish the role that adventure pursuits played in developing human-nature relationships. Martin (2004) found that for some respondents, being in an outdoor environment without the necessary technical skills associated with a given outdoor pursuit, had detrimental effects on their enjoyment of and their relationship with the natural environment. This finding begins to resonate with participant age when it is revealed that Martin’s respondents were above the age of 18 and participating voluntarily in a vocational outdoor education course. In light of these respondent characteristics, Martin insightfully asks “I wonder how less motivated Year 9 [equivalent to Year 10 in New Zealand] students ambivalent about the environment would respond in such circumstances?” (p. 25).

In relation to this study, it certainly appears that this group of New Zealand Year 10 students are somewhat ambivalent about the natural environment; a finding which has implications for outdoor education practice. If students of this age are ambivalent in this way, programmes which emphasise an ‘outdoor experience’, rather than a ‘social experience’ may be counter-productive because they fail to recognise the priorities of young people today. Young people’s priorities and their wider social-psychological and cultural context is addressed extensively in the leisure literature and will be referred to in the following discussion.

### 7.4 The wider social-psychological and cultural context of young people today

According to Roberts (2006), “youth’s new condition” is a result of dramatic social changes which have altered the nature of the youth life stage for most young people today from what it was prior to the 1970s (p. 129). He argues that the lives of youth today are exemplified by destandardisation, meaning that their lives are more varied and uncertain than the lives of youth in previous generations. Owing to this uncertainty, understanding leisure preferences within the context of the ‘Family Life-cycle’ theorised by Rapoport and Rapoport (Clarke & Critcher, 1985), it could be argued, has become obsolete because age is less of a predictor of leisure choices, making it difficult to generalise about people of a given age group (Roberts, 2006). Despite this criticism, Roberts recognised that people still pass through a ‘life course’, therefore, Rapoport and Rapoport’s identification of adolescence as the first of four life stages associated with leisure and family is significant as it highlights the fact that adolescents
experience events differently from older people on account of their pre-occupations and motivations. The Rapoports argue that adolescents are preoccupied with exploring their personal identity and, therefore, tend to seek out new experiences in which to do this (Clarke & Critcher, 1985). In this sense, then, school camp as a different, unique experience, seems to suitably address this adolescent need and can be considered a container in which young people can experiment with new relationships, and generate new understandings of their social worlds and their place within them.

It is unsurprising that the young people involved in this study emphasised school camp as being primarily a social experience given the importance of their peers and social networks in their lives: “…simply being with their friends is extremely important to most young people” (Roberts, 2006, p. 132). O’Donovan (2002; cited in Green, 2004) also observed that “adolescents place a lot of importance on belonging, on being included, on being ‘normal’, and on being part of a group” (p. 78). Similar notions of friendship and belonging were observed in a study of the lives of over 100 New Zealand teenagers (Weaver, 2001, 2002). In terms of school camp, then, while students participated in outdoor activities in an outdoor environment, their main priority was with whom they were spending time rather than what they were doing and where they were. This finding serves as a reminder of the central importance of the ‘social experience’ and establishment of a community to participants in outdoor education programmes. This study, therefore, offers an insightful complement to the quantitative studies investigating psychometric outcomes of outdoor education programmes, which seem to largely focus on the individual.

A focus on the individual is not restricted to the field of outdoor education, of course. Drawing from academic literature regarding leisure again, researchers have noted that leisure provision has become increasingly individualised and, consequently, leisure research has tended to focus on the individual while neglecting notions of community and social engagement (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). The effect of this research emphasis “has been to restrict our perception of the social benefits of leisure as a practice to those that are reaped by the individual (e.g., individual health and well-being), and to de-emphasize the meaning of leisure to the community” (Arai & Pedlar, 2003, p. 186, emphasis added). This study, then, re-emphasises the central importance of community to the outdoor education experiences of adolescents. In doing so, it highlights the important aspects of outdoor experience and provides in-depth insight into these enjoyable, social and unique experiences from the perspective of participants.
Recognition of the importance which young people place on social experiences has driven researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of the British sport and physical education curriculum in promoting lifelong participation in physical activity (see, for example, Green, 2004; Green, Smith, & Roberts, 2005; Tomlinson, Ravenscroft, Wheaton, & Gilchrist, 2005). This literature is relevant to the present discussion because, like physical education, outdoor education exists within the context of the school curriculum. Green (2004) argued that it is not realistic to persuade young people that physical activity…

…should be viewed – in terms of its utility value – as primarily a vehicle for improving their health and fitness……It is my contention, however, that lifelong participation in sport and physical activity is not likely to be achieved by an approach emphasising attitudinal change. Rather, it is better to concentrate efforts on establishing a context in which young people are likely to acquire and routinize wide sporting repertoires that have a tendency to lead to ongoing participation (p. 83).

The ‘context’ which needs to be established, advocated by Green, requires sport and physical activity to be positioned as social experiences where young people can engage in a wide range of activities. That is, the intended outcome of lifelong participation in physical activity is the same, but the way in which it is imparted to students differs. Such a perspective is useful within the context of school camp under scrutiny here. Given young people’s social interaction priorities, it is perhaps little wonder that understanding of self and the environment attracted less emphasis in the school camp experiences of students, anymore than the ‘utility value’ (health and fitness) of physical activity. Thus, to use Green’s suggestion, perhaps the challenge for outdoor educators is to establish programmes which are primarily social experiences, but that might inculcate understandings of self and the environment more subtly. Understanding of the self and environment on the part of students, however, may not be immediately realised, but given the changing nature of experience, this understanding may be realised in time.

7.5 Chapter summary

School camp is primarily an enjoyable, social experience. For outdoor educators, this is encouraging because it shows that, for the most part, students’ experiences at camp are positive. From this premise, it might be argued that if students are having ‘fun’ and enjoying camp, then this establishes a sound basis for learning to take place. Yet at the same time the emphasis that students placed on their social experiences, at the expense of alternative experiences (e.g., an outdoor experience or a challenging experience), presents a potential threat to outdoor education theory and philosophy.
Outdoor programmes, as currently practiced, may facilitate social interaction opportunities simply because of the opportunity they provide for students to be together, in a place that is not school and away from other distractions, rather than because of specific, unique, outdoor, environmental attributes. It might be argued that students appeared not to develop a greater understanding of the environment because the programmes were not designed for such a purpose (as indicated by the purposes communicated by Athens Academy and Pewsey Vale staff). It should be remembered, though, that both schools sought personal development outcomes, yet students’ reports included little reference to these outcomes. In addition, when an understanding of ‘experience’ as subjective and contextual is applied, alternative experiences of camp (e.g., an outdoor experience) could be reasonably expected to emerge.

This study also supports previous researchers’ conclusions that qualitative methods provide vital insight into the ways student experience outdoor programmes. The next chapter specifically addresses the second main objective of this thesis; evaluating the usefulness of photo-elicitation interviews within the context of school camps.
Chapter Eight

A REFLEXIVE UNDERSTANDING OF USING PHOTO-ELICITATION INTERVIEWS IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL CAMPS

Most qualitative research methods handbooks discuss the influence of the researcher on the research process (see, for example, Flick, 2006; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Law (2004) argued further that not only researchers but “methods also craft realities” (p. 153, emphasis in original). Reflecting on the ways in which methods may influence the results and interpretations of a given study, is another aspect of reflexivity in social science research.

With this in mind, this chapter addresses the second objective of this study: to utilise, apply and evaluate the usefulness of the photo-elicitation interview technique as a method of investigation into ways in which students experience school-based outdoor education programmes. From practical and theoretical perspectives, this chapter discusses the suitability of the photo-elicitation interview technique to investigate school camp from the perspective of the student, and the impact of this method on the research process and, subsequently, the results generated. The chapter is organised into four sections: the presence of cameras and photographs; the act of taking photographs; power dynamics and eliciting responses; and the photo-statements.

The photo-elicitation interview technique is a modification of the traditional words-alone, in-depth interview technique. The fundamental difference between the two techniques is that photo-elicitation interviews use photographs as a stimulus to generate a conversation between the researcher and the participant (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2). In light of this, the inclusion of cameras and photographs in the research process is the starting point for evaluating the usefulness of this method.

8.1 The presence of cameras and photographs

“The only thing you can guarantee about teenagers is that they are unpredictable.”

(Teacher – Pewsey Vale camp)

For the most part, the application of photo-elicitation interviews to explore Year 10 camp from the perspective of the student was successful. To the researcher’s knowledge, this study was the first to use the photo-elicitation interview technique within an outdoor education context with adolescents. Loeffler’s (2004a, 2004b, 2005) application of photo-elicitation
interviews with university-aged students who participated in a range of outdoor programmes was similar and did inform the study reported here, but two fundamental differences between the studies exist: the age of the participants, and the provision of cameras. While other photo-elicitation studies involving young people have been successful, the implications of providing adolescent participants who were going to attend a residential outdoor education programme with cameras were not known at the beginning of the research.

Providing students with cameras and allowing them to keep their photographs seem to be attractive features of the study and encouraged students to participate. Some students responded to the invitation to participate because it sounded like a ‘fun’, interesting or good idea. Other students expressed reasons that were more complex. An enthusiasm or a desire to take photographs at camp, which students equated with creating memories from camp, underpinned their motivations for volunteering to be part of this research. This study, simply, provided them with an opportunity to do so. Respondents in Loeffler’s (2004b) study also articulated similar desires to ‘capture’ and remember their outdoor experience.

Moreover, the cameras used in this study were ‘free’, so provided a viable solution to camera access issues experienced by some students. The cameras were also inexpensive, so required little responsibility (relative to a more expensive camera) on the part of the student. The following interview excerpts illustrate students’ motivations.

*Reasons: Sounded like a good idea/to create memories/little responsibility*
I really wanted to get memories from camp, cos I know taking the family camera I could not do that, I couldn’t trust myself. But, yeah, I just wanted memories from camp and it seemed like a good idea to do something cos I knew otherwise I wouldn’t get any pictures, you know chasing everybody trying to get pictures and I know Miss MacDonald has a couple of pictures of me like on the beam [a high ropes course activity], but ummm…otherwise I wouldn’t have had any chance to like remember [Tulip, Pewsey Vale].

*Reasons: A ‘free’ camera*
Ummm…I dunno it’s just like, it’s a free opportunity to take some pictures of some friends, so it’s kind of like, why not I guess. And it all gets done for you, so it’s not too bad [Michael, Pewsey Vale].

*Reasons: Sounded like a good idea/access to a camera*
…cos I thought it sounded like a good idea doing this thing for you and I was like, it was a chance to have a camera out there as well, cos I don’t have my own one [Caitlan, Athens Academy].

A secondary motivation to participate was a benevolent attitude on the part of the students towards the researcher. For example, Jonty (Pewsey Vale) said, “Ummm… I don’t know
Part D: Discussion
eally. I just thought I’d help you out” and Mary Ann (Athens Academy) commented, “Ummm…cos I wanted to help out with your like research and stuff, I like helping people. And well, just pretty much to help out, I didn’t do it for the camera, I did it for your research.”

Student behaviour and their interview responses indicated that students also highly valued the images they created; therefore, another attractive feature of this study was allowing students to retain their photographs. The majority of students said they would undoubtedly keep their photographs to remind them of their time at Year 10 camp. Ethel (Pewsey Vale) described her photos with the following: “Each is sort of a memory of Year 10 camp.” Toaster’s (Pewsey Vale) response was, “Ummm…I dunno, I might ummm…like with the digital versions I might put some on my website, but ummm…I don’t know…but I will probably, I definitely won’t neglect them and that, they’re valuable memories.” Similarly, Jayne said, “[I’ll] put them on Bebo and just I dunno, kind of keep them safe and things like that, so I can look back on them and remember” (Athens Academy). From a practical perspective, students intended to post their photographs on their Bebo or MySpace webpage, put them in a photo album or scrapbook, show family members or friends directly or display their photographs in their bedrooms.

The desire to remember school camp through photography and the importance of their photographs to the participants indicates that school camp is a key event in the lives of these young people. Comments from staff at both schools reinforce this conclusion: they said that, each year, students in their final year often recall their time at Year 10 camp. When considered alongside literature which highlights the ways in which photography usually captures memorable events, rather than the ordinary and the familiar (Harrison, 2004; Shrove, Watson, Hand, & Ingram, 2007), use of the photo-elicitation interview technique may be particularly suitable for investigating key events in the ‘lives’ of adolescents that they wish to remember. In addition, the importance of creating photographic memories from camp for this group of students may have contributed to the very low attrition rate recorded in this study: just one camera was lost and all students attended their interview. The low attrition rate for student interview participation may have resulted from the way the researcher collected the cameras, arranged for image processing and brought the photographs to each interview. This process ensured that image processing occurred in a timely manner and eliminated financial costs to the participants. A benefit of this process, of course, was that the easiest way for students to collect their photographs was to attend their interview. These characteristics of the
study were not designed to be incentives, but appear to have contributed to the willingness of students to participate and, consequently, to the success of the study.\textsuperscript{42}

All students in this study received an individual research camera to take to camp. The rationale for this was because in Loeffler’s (2004a, 2004b, 2005) study, respondents were invited to participate after they had taken part in an outdoor experience. This recruitment method introduces a potential bias into the research sample because only those people who had a camera and took photographs could be involved in the research. The method used in the study reported here (providing students with cameras before camp), though, could be open to criticism regarding a possible sampling bias because participants may have been only those students who either did not own or did not have access to a camera. Evidence from the interviews does not substantiate such a claim. As discussed above, one of the reasons students volunteered to participate was because they did not want the responsibility of taking more expensive cameras to which they had access. Furthermore, a few students took personal cameras as well as the research-provided cameras.

\subsection{8.1.1 Personal cameras}

Six students took personal cameras to camp, as well as their research camera: two from Pewsey Vale and four from Athens Academy. The presence of personal cameras raises two primary issues: personal cameras could create a distraction for the students resulting in the research camera being neglected; and personal cameras could enable participants to ‘censor’ the photographs they take on their research camera.\textsuperscript{43} Both issues could potentially distort the students’ accounts of school camp as communicated to the researcher.

Personal cameras appear to have substantially distorted students’ accounts of school in just two cases. In the first instance, Wendy (Athens Academy) produced just eight images on her research camera, despite the entire film having been exposed. She was unable to explain this outcome, but a potential explanation is that she may have prioritised the use of her personal camera, which she took with her on the camp, above the use of her research camera. In the

\textsuperscript{42} In accordance with social science ethical standards, the researcher informed participants of their right to withdraw their participation from the project at any stage. They were also informed that the photographs would still be theirs to keep.

\textsuperscript{43} Students were encouraged to bring any photographs which they took on personal cameras to their interview; however, none of the students did so.
second instance, Andy (Athens Academy) deliberately ‘censored’ the photographs she took on her research camera. The following is from Andy’s interview.

Interviewer: Do you have any pictures of this, like the high ropes and mud run on your other [personal] camera?

Andy: None. Just like, these photos [indicates to the photos she took on her research camera that are on the desk]. These photos I took cos I knew like, I knew you were going to see them obviously. Like these are what I would post on Bebo and up on my pin board in my room and the other photos [on her personal camera] are photos that no one else should ever see. They’re just between us four, like we all look horrible, like Maree in one of the photos she’s going like this [respondent makes a face] and Krissy and Maree are coughing in the photos and sneezing in the photos. They’re photos that are so embarrassing that only us four will ever see them.

Andy’s quote suggests that she distinguished a difference between the use of her research camera and the use of her personal camera. Two other students who took personal cameras only used their research camera. For example, Maureen (Athens Academy) commented that “it was kind of hard enough taking that [her research camera] round, so I didn’t use it [her personal camera]. I only used one.” Lilli (Pewsey Vale) explained that her research camera provided her with an opportunity to take more photographs than would be the case if she only had her personal camera; for whatever reason, however, she only used her research camera. These four examples indicate that participants manage the presence of personal cameras in different ways.

8.2 The act of taking photographs

Before discussing issues that arose in this study relating to the act of taking photographs, it is important to consider the purpose of a camera at a broader social and cultural level. To quote Harrison (2004), “Photography is a socially regulated and highly conventional activity” (p. 28). That is, there are social norms governing what is considered to be appropriate to photograph and not everything that could be photographed is photographed (Harrison, 2004). In addition, the content of amateur photographs is usually social in nature and tend to portray “people, their families and significant others, and their leisure pursuits as happy, healthy, together or united in untroubled worlds” (Harrison, 2004, p. 37). The dominance of the social experience of school camp represented in this thesis, at the expense of other experiences, could lie in the way in which cameras are used to capture social aspects of life. A quote from Michael (Pewsey Vale) suggests that for students in this study, cameras are used to capture positive social experiences. When asked why he participated in this study, he said it was an “opportunity to take some pictures of some friends.” Other students indicated that they used
their cameras to remember the positive experiences. Lilli (Pewsey Vale) commented that she took photographs of things she enjoyed, that were “cool” or were humorous. Similarly, Jessica (Athens Academy) said “I just took photos of quite good memories that I thought would be like real funny and real cool memories and stuff.” Furthermore, with the proliferation of digital photography and the inclusion of cameras in mobile phones, photography has become more popular and the immediacy of social interaction more easily captured. Thus, it seems that student-photography could usefully be applied to gain a more in-depth understanding of the social experiences of outdoor education programmes.

Another characteristic of this study which might have been influenced by the use of cameras is the absence of photographs that elicited accounts of ‘negative’ experiences. While documentary photographers might deliberately produce images of suffering and devastation, amateur photographers generally capture positive experiences or moments of happiness (Shrove et al., 2007). In this way, then, the open-ended approach used in this study may be unable to capture camp experiences other than the positive. If future photo-elicitation interview studies hope to capture ‘negative’ experiences, a more directive approach might need to be adopted.

The success of a study utilising the photo-elicitation interview technique is dependent upon the production of images that can stimulate an interview conversation; in this case, research participants took their own photographs. Students appear to have been responsible with their cameras which might have been associated with the fact that they could retain their photographs and, therefore, benefited from returning their camera. They also seem to have heeded the suggestion that they might want to pace their photographs in case something important happened nearer the end of camp, because twenty-six participants said that they had photographs to take on all three days of their camp. This more participant-driven approach (rather than the researcher taking photographs), however, relies on three factors: participants being able to take photographs; participants remembering to take photographs; and participants determining the content of their photographs. All of these issues potentially alter student accounts of school camp and are discussed below.

8.2.1 Participants being able to take photographs

For the majority of participants in this study, the act of taking photographs does not seem to have been problematic because thirty-two participants produced at least 16 images. Just one participant mentioned that she found it difficult to take photographs. Kate (Athens Academy)
said, “I kind of found it hard to actually take pictures because you’re so busy constantly, but you couldn’t really fit it in with what the instructors were trying to say.” She continued later, “I kind of rushed at the end, cos as I say I didn’t have, you didn’t have a lot of time, well I didn’t think I had much time.” None of the other participants raised this issue, but Cypris (Pewsey Vale) described a situation where she felt unable to go and get her camera to take a picture of an aspect of camp she enjoyed. She said…

…I really enjoyed cooking with our group, cos we had a really good cooking group that worked really well together and stuff and it was just from our form class. Ummm...yeah we worked really well and we were making yummy food, so some photos of that would have been good, but ummm...me being really clever and everything, they would ring the bell for dinner and I wouldn’t know what the time was at all any time on camp, so I’d come up and I was like, its dinner time and I was like, I should go and get my camera, but they were all like giving you your boxes and stuff to take and you’re off, and I was just like, ok. But I would have really liked some photos of us cooking, cos that was cool cos I really enjoyed that.

The large number of photographs produced by each participant indicates that the participants mastered the technical use of the camera; however, another technical inadequacy presented a more significant problem concerning whether or not students could take photographs; the cameras were not waterproof.

*The use of 27-exposure, disposable cameras*

The 27-exposure, disposable cameras with built-in flash used in this research were adequate, but they were not waterproof; therefore, students were unable to capture some aspects of camp that they would have liked to have photographed. In particular, students were either unable or reluctant to take their cameras to activities involving water.\(^{44}\) This was not unforeseen, but due to financial limitations, the provision of waterproof cameras was not feasible. However, the water activities appear to have been some of the students’ preferred aspects of camp; consequently, the extent of the problem was greater than initially expected. Approximately half of the students would have liked to have taken their camera to the water activities. For example, Matt (Pewsey Vale) said he “wanted to take the camera [coasteering], but I didn’t want to get it wet cos it would be stuffed, I wanted to take it because we were jumping off cliffs, [and] that was real good”. Although the cameras were not waterproof, some students overcame this limitation and were able to capture the water activities they

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\(^{44}\) Pewsey Vale students participated in two water activities: kayaking and coasteering, and Athens Academy students could not take their cameras to the river-crossing exercises. The researcher did not prevent participants from taking their cameras to water activities, but she did advise students not to take them to places and/or activities where they did not think they could keep them safe.
enjoyed by photographing their group preparing for the activity. For example, Tulip (Pewsey Vale) said, “I was going to take pictures of kayaking, but I couldn’t bring myself to take it near water, so the closest I got was up in the kayaking gear shed.” Similarly, when Peter (Pewsey Vale) was completing his photo-statements, he indicated he did not have a photograph of coasteering to illustrate what he liked most about camp. Instead, he used a photograph of himself and his friends dressed in their wetsuits and helmets before going coasteering. It is important to remember, though, that the weather during both camp weeks was very good (with the exception of the first Pewsey Vale camp where one night it rained). Had the weather been inclement, non-waterproof cameras could have posed additional problems and further restricted the situations in which participants could use their cameras.

### 8.2.2 Participants remembering (or forgetting) to take photographs

Students ‘forgetting’ their camera during certain periods of camp can also distort what is included in student accounts. A potential explanation is the excitement generated at camp. Cypris (Pewsey Vale) said the following when queried about the absence of abseiling photographs. “Ummm…yip, we did do that [abseiling] and I forgot my camera, that was my first activity and I had kind of arrived and was like ohhh…abseiling and then was like bugger.” Forgetting their cameras, resulted in students missing opportunities to take photographs of things that they otherwise could have (unlike the water activities discussed above where they were unable to take photographs). Jon (Pewsey Vale), for example, said he forgot about his camera on the first day of camp, but would have liked to have taken photographs at the high ropes course which was his first technical activity. Students also seemed to be more likely to remember their cameras and take photographs during the more relaxing times at camp, rather than the structured formal activities. Harri’s photographs, for example, were mostly taken during free time. She attributed this emphasis to an “enjoyment aspect”.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think you don’t have any pictures of other activities?

**Harri:** I was just thinking that too. No ummm….I guess the time when I had my camera and when I was thinking was the free-time and I dunno, that’s the part I enjoyed the most like really, I did enjoy just hanging out and I guess, yeah like, things like the water ones I didn’t take my camera and some of them, I just forgot. Yeah…

Forgetting their cameras also resulted in sets of photographs with either an emphasis on particular activities or times during camp. For example, “I had it for most of the time. I took most of them on the second day because I forgot on the first day and then I thought ohhh…I should take some pictures and away I went” (Tulip, Pewsey Vale). In some cases, the high
number of photographs taken at a particular time during camp was a result of the participants having forgotten to take photographs earlier in the camp and then feeling obliged to ‘use up’ their photos. For example, Jessica (Athens Academy) explained (unprompted) her large number of photographs depicting her time at the high ropes course with “I’ve got lots of high ropes cos it was our last activity and I still had quite a few photos.” In a similar vein, Matt (Pewsey Vale) said, “I just wanted to finish it. I just thought I’d finish them up” and Orchid (Pewsey Vale) said “I don’t know why I took that photo either; I think it was just like to use them up, cause I wanted to use them all.”

As a result of these issues, it was difficult to ascertain how much of the school camp experience might have been represented in students’ photographs. This was further complicated by students having difficulty recalling when they took specific photographs during camp. A potential solution to this difficulty would be to use cameras which have the capacity to print the date and time on each photograph. In addition to students being able to and remembering to take photographs, another issue that influences the content of students’ photographs and, therefore, influences their interview conversation, was whether or not participants determined the content of their images alone.

8.2.3 Participants determining the content of their photographs

Students not involved in the study influenced the content of participants’ photographs in two ways: by taking photographs on participants’ cameras and by suggesting to participants what photographs they should take. In some cases, research participants knew other students had taken photographs with their camera, but in others, they did not. Matt (Pewsey Vale) had seven images that he did not know had been taken and Ethel (Pewsey Vale) said that her friend had told her there may be some “surprise” photographs. Then, for Anton (Pewsey Vale), who did not return his camera, the influence of other students seems to have been a major problem. His synopsis of the situation is as follows:

Well I left [for] camp and I started taking pictures and then I left it in my bunkroom while I was eating lunch, tea, lunch, something like that, one of them, and then when I came back about 10 pictures had been taken on the camera, which I didn’t know about. Ummm…and then when I came back inside the camera ended up being finished on the first day, on the Monday and then the camera completely vanished from my bunkroom on the second day, but I stopped taking it round because it was full. Ummm,…and so it completely vanished and that was the end of the camera [Anton, Pewsey Vale].

Other students also made suggestions about what research participants should photograph and the research participants usually complied. For example, Wayne (Pewsey Vale) had a picture
of a friend in their bunkroom because his friend asked him to take the photograph. Jonty (Pewsey Vale) intended to save his last photo to capture his last view of the campsite from the bus or of the bus driver unloading their bags back at school, but his friend asked him to take a picture of her and he complied. Incidents such as this raise the question as to the significance of photographs that were dictated by other students, to the participants themselves and whether or not these should be included in a photo-elicitation interview.

The issues discussed above, regarding the act of taking photographs (non-waterproof cameras, students forgetting their cameras, the influence of other students), potentially distort the content of participants’ photographs, which in turn influences the conversation that can take place in the interview. These observations are interesting in light of one of the central tenets of the photo-elicitation interview technique. Advocates of photo-elicitation interviews highlight the ways in which photographs illuminate additional information that may not have been accessed in a traditional words-alone interview (see, for example, Carlsson, 2001; Collier Jr & Collier, 1986). The evidence presented above, however, suggests that there are several issues associated with allowing participants to produce their own photographs which might distort the camp experience from their perspective and, consequently, could mask other aspects of the topic under investigation. In light of this, it is important to remember that participants’ photographs do not represent all that is true about a situation for them, but they represent something that is true for them (Harper, 1994). Nevertheless, the issues outlined above need to be considered and, if possible, mitigated.

In this particular study, possible distortion of the content of students’ photographs was mitigated in several ways. First, all participants were asked if they personally took, or asked other people to take all of their images in their set of photographs: any images that did not meet these criteria were removed before the interview started. Second, students were asked to describe any aspects of camp that they would have liked to have taken photographs of, but either could not or did not. This second question began to address the suggestion from Loeffler (2004a) that photo-elicitation interview studies should consider what has not been photographed. Although using cameras to generate stimuli from which students could discuss their camp experiences resulted in some aspects of camp not being represented in their photographs, this inherent weakness is offset by the benefit that the inclusion of photographs can disrupt the power dynamics between researchers and participants and elicit information that might have remained obscured.
8.3 **Power dynamics and eliciting responses**
The two main benefits of using photo-elicitation interviews are the way this technique disrupts the traditional power relationships in the research process, and the way photographs can illuminate additional information that may not have been revealed in a words-alone interview (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2). In this study, disruption of traditional power dynamics was difficult to assess, but the elicitation of additional information was more evident.

8.3.1 **Disruption of power dynamics**
From a theoretical perspective, the photo-elicitation interviewing technique potentially disrupts traditional research power relationships. The open-ended, non-directive interview approach and the use of participant-generated images as interview stimuli gave participants much control over the creation of the images and might have disrupted the power dynamics during the research process. However, from a practical perspective, the ways in which photo-elicitation interviews disrupted the traditional research power relationships in this study were difficult to identify. An observable benefit of the photo-elicitation technique, however, is the ease with which the researcher established rapport with the participant. Establishment of rapport is integral to the quality of qualitative research (Hay, 2000); and the inclusion of photographs seems to have contributed to this process. Students viewed their photographs for the first time at the beginning of their interview, which seemed to reduce the formality associated with being interviewed by an adult because it immediately provided a different focus for the student. The majority of respondents were excited to see their photographs and seemed to enjoy recalling their time at camp as they looked through their images. Students demonstrated their enjoyment by giggling and some made comments such as “that came out quite cool” and “oh…beautiful.” The photographs were also concrete objects and, from that point on, their images became the focus of the interview. This seemed to alleviate the pressure associated with being questioned directly (Collier Jr, 1957). Viewing their photographs also provided an opportunity for respondents to recall their camp experience. For example, early in his interview Toaster (Pewsey Vale) said, “There’s a lot of good memories here.” It is from these stimuli that participant responses emerge.

8.3.2 **Eliciting responses**
The inclusion of participant-generated photographs elicited additional information that may not have arisen in an interview without photographs. Alana (Pewsey Vale) even apologised for telling stories: “Oh…yeah, we were at the high ropes, sorry I keep telling you stories.”
Part D: Discussion

The most salient example came from Cypris’ (Pewsey Vale) interview when she talked about a photograph which simply depicted her standing on a bridge.

**Cypris:** …Now there’s a really good story behind that picture.

**Interviewer:** Ok, go for it.

**Cypris:** This is me, ummm…we did orienteering, it was probably my favourite activity, usually I hate it, but it was just really fun. I was with someone else who really wanted to do well and run, so we ran and it was really funny on this bridge. The bit that you hold on to is elastic……and I was like going across, you know real fast and I had my pen in my hand and I was holding on and we needed the pen to write down the clues and I dropped the pen in the river. So, I get back off the bridge and I take my shoes off and I run up the river and I’m like splashing around and ummm…yeah I got to the pen, quite a bit up stream, trying to get to the thing and I climbed up onto the bridge and all my feet were really cut and I couldn’t put my shoes back on and all my socks were ripped up like in shreds so I was like ok, but we came first, so it was quite hilarious. But, ummm…so that was quite funny cos I was like crap, my pen and then I go it down the river and I was like it works, I was drawing on my hand [to check that it still worked], but yip….

She later revealed the importance of her time spent orienteering as being primarily social.

**Interviewer:** Ok then, what would you say would have been the most important part of camp for you?

**Cypris:** Ummm… I dunno, probably when I went orienteering with Orchid, because before kind of camp I didn’t really talk to Orchid that much, well we talked, but it was like hi, how’s the weather. But ummm…yeah, so we were kind of, we were orienteering and we were running along and we were talking about stuff and she was talking to me about all this stuff and I was like oh yeah… I didn’t know that and so we kind of got really close when we were orienteering and we were the only two girls from our class in our group for activities and we talked lots then as well.

While the majority of interviews flowed well, the presence of photographs did not seem to elicit this degree of ‘story-telling’ in all cases. Ethel (Pewsey Vale), for example, made the following simple descriptions as she described some of her photographs.

…[photo 1] she is like tiny and she has this massive jersey that comes down to about there [participant indicates to her knees]. That’s a nice name [photo 2 in reference to the picture of her pseudonym – Ethel]. That’s on the way home, [photo 3] that’s the boys who wanted to straighten their hair, [photo 4] that’s after coasteering. [photo 5] I just like this photo cos it’s like where we did our deviations in there, but all the walls were like, you can tell that kids have painted them, it’s just really like, it’s cool and there’s like different patterns on each wall and I dunno, it’s just a cool room. But, like the door, there’s a massive hole in it and there’s a massive hole in the roof. [photo 6] That’s at the bonfire. [photo 7] Oh yeah. That’s at high ropes, that’s like 2, 3 storey’s high and you just go through these ropes and harnesses, it’s quite challenging. [photo 8] That’s Lydia, she was like falling off it and it was like 3 storey’s high and she was just like climbing up it with her legs. And yeah, that looks like them.
In interviews such as this, the interviewer allowed the student to finish his or her descriptions and then probed for further information by asking about each image individually. Thus, evidence of the inherent capacity of photographs to elicit additional information is mixed. Nevertheless, the inclusion of photographs potentially was important to the success of the study because students’ photographs did provide conversation stimuli which may have improved the quality of all interviews. Not all respondents were equally articulate (possibly a result of the self-selection sampling procedure used) and, therefore, the inclusion of photographs from which to generate a conversation might have resulted in a more successful interview with less articulate students than had a traditional words-alone interview been used. In particular, interviews with male participants were shorter and more difficult to conduct than interviews with female participants (see Chapter Four, 4.3.6). This may have been a result of either the verbal reticence of adolescent boys, or the fact that the researcher was female herself and male participants were, therefore, more reluctant to engage with her. These two explanations are not unique to photo-elicitation interview studies, however. Nevertheless, researchers might consider conducting future studies of this type in mixed-sex research teams.

The ways in which photographs might have improved the quality of students’ interviews highlights the importance of including photographs in the research process reported here. An equally important aspect of the process, however, was obtaining first-hand explanations from the students.

The importance of students’ interpretations
As mentioned above, the photograph which elicited the quoted response from Cypris simply depicted her standing on a bridge. At first glance the photograph appeared unremarkable and seemed to reveal little about her time at camp: her subjective interpretation was integral. That is, only when viewed alongside a first-hand account from the photographer, which provides context, does the image become meaningful (Martin & Martin, 2004). In this study, there were many examples like this, particularly in relation to events which students found humorous. To the researcher (as an outsider), the photographs alone rarely held any humour value. The reason for this is because “[l]ike all cultural objects, photographs get meaning from their context” (Becker, 2007, p. 192). In light of this, it is vital that researchers do not view participants’ photographs prior to the interview because images might be dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant before participants have had an opportunity to offer explanations. Therefore, in pursuit of understanding the ways in which respondents experience given events, it is vital that respondents are given the opportunity to interpret their photographs.
Other applications of the photo-elicitation technique which do not include an interview component and rely on researcher interpretations alone are inappropriate. Given the changing nature of interpretation and, therefore, experience (see Chapter Two, Section 2.5.1), future researchers could conduct longitudinal studies, using the same participant-generated photographs to investigate how outdoor education experiences might change over time.

On the one hand, then, students’ interpretations of their photographs are vital to the success of photo-elicitation interview studies when investigating experience. On the other hand, the connection between an image and its interpretation is the reason for so few photographs being able to be presented in this thesis without breaching participants’ anonymity. This issue was complicated further by the predominance of social situations and people depicted in students’ photographs. Although pseudonyms were used, photographs are concrete objects, so it is possible that readers might recognise a particular photograph which, if connected to a given quotation, renders the photographer’s true identity being revealed. Consequently, to maintain participants’ anonymity, participant-generated photographs can only be used if more than one individual could have created it. This rule was followed in the present study. Although other photo-elicitation interview studies have published participants’ photographs, in such articles there is little comment on the ethical relationships established with respondents.

As discussed in Chapter Three (see Section 3.2), the photographs are not the research data in photo-elicitation studies, instead, respondents’ interpretations of their images is of primary research interest. It might be argued that the inclusion of photographs in the presentation of results is unnecessary. However, in many cases, additional photographs could have provided supplementary pictorial and contextual information to the results presented here. In light of this, researchers using the photo-elicitation technique might consider alternative ethical arrangements to enable greater use of participants’ photographs. One alternative could be to establish a covenantal relationship with respondents in which there is agreement that any photographs used will only portray respondents in a positive manner and only after agreement from respondents that individual images can be used. This would also enable photographers to receive honorariums if their photographs were published. While any ethical solution will still be complex, researchers are encouraged to explore other possibilities especially in light of Tolich’s (2001) argument concerning “small-town New Zealand” (p. 9) and the difficulties in guaranteeing anonymity in this country.
Researchers should also be aware of the complexities of conducting research within schools. During this study, school staff impressed on the researcher the size of their workload and their time constraints for assisting with the study. In light of this, the researcher was mindful of ensuring that the study required minimal assistance from teachers. Operating in this environment meant that any extension to the study such as returning ‘to the field’ to conduct follow-up interviews or seeking respondents’ reaction to the researcher’s interpretation of the data was difficult to implement. A further impediment was the timing of the data collection (immediately before the summer holidays) which meant that gathering together the respondents as a group was not feasible.

8.4 The photo-statements

The photo-statement technique used in this study was adapted from a study by Darbyshire et al. (2005) into the ways in which children experience place, space and physical activity.45 While these statements produced concise, manageable data, which reinforced the students’ verbal accounts, the use of these statements was slightly problematic. In some instances, students did not have photographs to illustrate the content of their statements. This issue only arose for the groups of statements relating to what students liked most and what they liked least about camp. Three respondents did not have a photograph of what they liked most and 14 respondents had not taken a photograph of an aspect of camp they disliked. The latter is, perhaps, unsurprising given that for many of these students their photographs were the basis of ‘good memories’; therefore, they were unlikely to take photographs of things or situations that they disliked or that elicited unpleasant memories (see Section 8.2).

The purpose of including the ‘What I liked least about camp’ statement was to capture any negative experiences associated with outdoor programmes that are largely absent from the literature. The difficulty which students had in completing this statement, however, highlighted the influence cameras might have had on the results and the way in which the inclusion of predetermined photo-statements was partly at odds with the participant-driven approach adopted. Although the statements were open-ended, which allowed students to determine their responses to an extent, a better use of photo-statements would be to adopt a completely open-ended approach. This could be done by asking students to choose the four images (for example) which showed what camp was like for them best and for them to write their own statement by way of explanation. Another possible solution would be to issue

45 See Chapter Three, Section 3.2.2 and Chapter Four, Section 4.3.3 for the introductory discussion of the use of this method in the study by Darbyshire et al (2005).
instructions to students that are more directive; however, this would need to be implemented with caution so as not to further undermine the participant-driven nature of photo-elicitation interviews such that it counteracted the benefits of the unstructured approach reported in this thesis.

8.5 Chapter summary
This exploration of school camp from the perspective of the participant utilised photo-elicitation interviews successfully. The strength of this study was the inclusion of both the cameras and photographs, which seemed to encourage young people to participate and aided in establishing rapport between the students and the researcher. It also seems that the inclusion of photographs increased the quality of interview responses on the part of students who might have been more reluctant to speak in a words-alone interview. As applied here, though, this method has several weaknesses, which potentially distorted student accounts of school camp: personal cameras; students being able to take photographs; students remembering to take photographs; and the influence of students’ peers on the images they produced. The photo-statements used in this study were useful in supporting the interview data, but warrant modification if used in future studies. The next and final chapter, Chapter Nine, brings the thesis to a close.
Chapter Nine

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous two chapters discussed the results of this study in relation to the two research objectives. This chapter concludes the thesis and has three primary purposes: to acknowledge the limitations of the study; to make recommendations for outdoor education practitioners and outdoor education researchers; and to offer concluding remarks. Each of the recommendations flow from the discussion in Chapters Seven and Eight, so are presented as a series of summarising bullet points.

9.1 Research limitations
This research project has three main limitations that need to be considered. The first limitation relates to the time frame over which the data collection took place. All 34 interviews were completed in a two-week period. This short time frame was unavoidable because the school term finished on Friday 14\textsuperscript{th} December, and to lessen participant attrition, interviews needed to take place before students left for the summer holidays. Consequently, while the school camp experience was still fresh in the minds of respondents, the researcher had little time to review interviews and reflect on the questioning techniques that were eliciting better responses.

A second limitation of the study is one that is inherent to much qualitative research, but must be acknowledged: generalisability. Owing to the qualitative method used here, the data reported in this thesis are not meant to represent “some nonexisting average” Year 10 student (Shafer, 1969; cited in Patterson et al., 1998, p. 430); therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the extent to which these experiences represent the experiences of all students who attended these camps. Instead, the experiences reported in this thesis should be thought of as representative types (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Patterson et al., 1998); that is, actual experiences of some of the students attending these particular school camps. This perspective is aligned with a key tenet of the photo-elicitation interview method; participants’ photographs do not represent all that is true for an individual, but they do represent something that is true for them (Harper, 1994). Thus, this research may not have captured all the possible types of experiences for both the individual research participants and the other camp attendees.
Chapter Nine – Recommendations and Conclusions

The third limitation relates to the research sample and the sampling procedures used. The participants in this study represent a particular profile of student, which was determined by the schools they attended and the self-selection sampling procedure used. Both schools have a decile rating of nine and have a ‘special religious character’. Consequently, the participants are from a high socio-economic background and have an affiliation with Christian beliefs and worldviews. In addition, the self-selection sampling procedure may have resulted in particular types of students volunteering to participate such as those who did not own a personal camera, those who viewed camp favourably and those who are more extroverted and willing to volunteer their participation. In light of this limitation and the subjective nature of experience, then, it is likely that students from different socio-economic backgrounds, different schools and with different motivations to participate would articulate different experiences of school camps.

In addition, experience is contextual. Consequently, the experiences of students at other school camps, or other types of camps (or outdoor education programmes) may differ from those of the students in this study. In light of this, readers are encouraged to contemplate the findings of this study and determine how they might apply to their situation.

9.2 Recommendations for outdoor education practitioners

The emphasis placed by the student respondents on the social nature of school camp serves to remind outdoor education practitioners of the importance which students place on the social opportunities provided by outdoor programmes. This study also provides an opportunity for school teachers and outdoor education professionals to reflect on the extent to which these experiences represent those that they intend. The results of this study highlight the importance placed by young people on the social aspects of camps. The recommendations which flow from the results of this study are presented below and are applicable to both school teachers and outdoor educators.

- The residential component of the outdoor education programmes in this study was valued highly by respondents, therefore, outdoor educators might consider carefully the implications of providing residential or non-residential outdoor education programmes (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.1).

- Programmes could be designed to reflect a stark contrast to teenage culture and students’ usual environments. This may require something as simple as organising a camp in an area without mobile coverage. In this study, the unintentional exclusion of mobile phones from one camp had a positive impact in facilitating social interaction and
allowing students to see a different perspective of their peers (see Chapter Seven, Sections 7.1 and 7.3).

- Female students, in particular, appear to value highly opportunities to interact with their teachers in a non-school context. Teachers need to be aware of the expectations female students (in particular) have for being able to interact with them while at camp (Chapter Seven, Section 7.1.1).

- Students in this study raised issues regarding the ways in which people ‘present’ themselves in different contexts. Outdoor educators might consider incorporating such issues into the ways in which they facilitate outdoor education activities and programmes (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.1).

- The ways in which students in this study articulated the social experience associated with structured outdoor activities suggests that outdoor educators might consider emphasising these social processes when using frontloading and debriefing facilitation techniques (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.1).

- At the time of their outdoor experience, adolescents may not necessarily value highly the outdoor environment or perceive camp as an ‘outdoor experience’. At camps organised for adolescents, promoting a greater understanding of the environment may require more deliberate programming than promoting a greater understanding of others, which seems able to occur in the absence of formal structure (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3).

- Given the way in which students in this study appeared to neglect the physical/natural environment, outdoor educators might consider alternative environments in which to provide students with enjoyable social experiences (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3).

### 9.3 Recommendations for researchers

The inclusion of cameras and photographs were attractive features of this study for the adolescent participants. Given these characteristics, photo-elicitation interviews seem to be particularly suitable for engaging young people in academic research. Consequently, photo-elicitation interviews warrant further use and evaluation within the context of outdoor education programmes for adolescents. The results from this study also suggest that this technique lends itself toward investigating the social aspects associated with outdoor education programmes. Researchers using this method might consider the following recommendations which result from current experience.

- The dominance of the social aspect found in this study requires further investigation in terms of the methods used (photo-elicitation vs non-photo-elicitation studies), setting
Chapter Nine – Recommendations and Conclusions

To investigate the ways in which student experiences of outdoor programmes change over time, longitudinal studies warrant research attention. For example, a follow-up study to the one reported here could be conducted with the same participants when they are in their final year of high school (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3.2; Chapter Eight, Section 8.3.2).

Good quality waterproof cameras should be used. If possible, cameras should also have the capacity to print the time and date on each photograph taken. This may necessitate more expensive multi-use cameras, but it would allow researchers to accurately determine when photographs were taken and evaluate what portion of an outdoor education experience is depicted in participants’ sets of photographs (see Chapter Eight, Sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2).

Photo-statements are a useful way to gather students’ experiences in a concise and manageable way, the content of which can be compared to verbal accounts. Photo-statements should, however, be applied using an entirely open-ended approach to avoid issues of students not having photographs to match their statements (Chapter Eight, Section 8.4).

Consideration should also be given to conducting future studies in research teams comprised of both male and female researchers, given differences in responsiveness of boys and girls in the interview situation (Chapter Eight, Section 8.3.2).

Given that the photo-elicitation interview technique relies on photographic stimuli, possible distortion of participants’ accounts needs to be lessened. Thus, future photo-elicitation studies will need to further investigate the impact and address the issues of personal cameras, other students not involved in the research, and which aspects participants were unable or forgot to photograph (Chapter Eight, Section 8.2).

To enable inclusion of a greater number of photographs, alternative ways to conduct research while meeting ethical standards should be explored (Chapter Eight, Section 8.3.2).

This study used a self-selection sampling procedure which raises issues regarding the generalisability of the results. While the results can be considered representative for the
students who participated in this study, they cannot be generalised to a wider population (see Chapter Seven; Chapter Eight, Section 8.3.2; Chapter Nine, Section 9.1). With this in mind, the use of sampling procedures other than self-selection should be explored. To improve the generalisability of future studies, the sample requires random selection. This could be done by accessing a list of all potential participants and randomly selecting the required number of students. Such procedures may be fundamental to being able to obtain more accounts of ‘negative’ outdoor education experiences (see Chapter Seven). It should be noted, however, that implementing such a procedure within the context of a school may not always be practicable because of a lack of time on the part of assisting school staff and because of ethical obligations.

9.4 Concluding remarks

Zink (2005) encouraged the outdoor education community to investigate what is outdoor education, rather than what it should or ought to be. She also challenged the outdoor community to ‘take students’ words seriously’. Using an open-ended, more participant-driven approach, the study has taken seriously the narrative accounts of students and achieved a more in-depth understanding of outdoor education experiences from their perspective. In doing so, this study provides a necessary complement to the quantitative studies which predominate in the outdoor education field.

This exploration of using photo-elicitation interviews within an outdoor education context has responded to Barrett and Greenaway’s (1995) call to include more young people’s accounts in outdoor/adventure education research, and Ewert’s (1987) call to expand the scope of research techniques used to investigate outdoor adventure. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of qualitative literature investigating outdoor education in New Zealand established by the likes of Lynch (2000), Davidson (2001), Zink (2004, 2005), and Stewart, (L. Stewart, 2006/07). These studies primarily seek a more in-depth understanding of outdoor education programmes, and future use of photo-elicitation interviews could successfully contribute to this objective. Consequently, this study reiterates Loeffler’s (2004a, 2004b) suggestion that researchers and professionals should consider the use of photo-elicitation interviews as a means of exploring the ways in which young people experience outdoor programmes, particularly given the ways in which the inclusion of cameras and photographs encouraged the participation of young people. The recommendations made above suggest that there are many areas which would be fertile ground for future research investigating school-based outdoor education programmes in New Zealand.
From the perspective of the student, outdoor education programmes like ‘school camp’ are primarily an enjoyable, social experience because they afford them an opportunity to explore peer interactions in a different context to school where peer interactions normally occur. This does not mean other aspects of school camp (e.g., the outdoor environment, the activities and the instructors) are unimportant, but rather that students were acutely aware of the unique social environment that school camp provided and were of an age where socialising with peers was a highly valued activity. It also does not mean that the psychometric outcomes reported in quantitative studies were absent, but that if students are given a ‘blank slate’, they emphasise the social experience. Recognition of the importance placed by students on the unique, social environment created during residential outdoor programmes might lead outdoor practitioners to consider modifying their programmes to better utilise the social opportunities that are created when groups of people spend time in novel contexts.

I began this thesis by identifying how I, the researcher, came to investigate student experience in the outdoors. Now, here, at the completion of this study, I offer the following reflections. Having participated in school camps during my schooling in New Zealand and having, subsequently, worked with young people in other outdoor education programmes, I suspected that students’ accounts would focus on the social experience school camp afforded them; however, I found the strength with which students in this study positively valued the social opportunities at camp surprising. When I look back on the photographs I took during school camps, the outdoor environment (in particular) features more often than in the accounts of the students in this study. Moreover, when I enter the outdoors for work or recreation, I continue to photograph my experiences with a dominant focus on the natural environment. In relation to this study, these differences arise because ‘experience’ is the subjective, recollected interpretations and perceptions of past events. That is, the ways in which I experience past events will be different to the experiences of others. In addition, viewing school camps at the age of 26, with the benefit of hindsight, is quite different from viewing camps shortly after they occur. A difference in perspective on the basis of age and maturity highlights the central importance of continuing to seek students’ first-hand narratives of their outdoor education experiences when assessing the value of outdoor education programmes.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview schedule relating to Research Objective Two

1. Which photograph did you take first? – When did you take it?
2. Which photograph can you remember taking last? – When did you take it?
3. Was there anything else at camp you would have liked to have photographed, but
   either could not or did not? (e.g., because of weather, water, not enough time, forgot)
   a. If so, can you please tell me about it?
4. Did you take all of these photographs yourself?
   a. If not, which ones did you not take? Did you know who took them?
5. Why did you choose to take part in this project?
6. Did you take your own camera to camp as well as the camera I gave you?
   a. If so, what sort of photographs did you take on it?
   b. If so, why did you choose to participate in this project?