All you do is have Fun! - Investigating the Developing Professional Identity of University Outdoor Leadership Students.

By

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Declaration

"I, Matthew Robert Cox, declare that the Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled 'All you do is have Fun! - Investigating the developing professional identity of university outdoor leadership students' is no more than 80,000 words, including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work." "I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures."

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Ethics Committee pertaining to application HRE12-313.

Signature: ████   Date: 20.10.2022

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Abstract

Current Outdoor Leadership literature focuses heavily on professional practice knowledge, skills and requirements. However, minimal consideration has been given to emerging outdoor leaders' professional identity development that creates a foundation for sound professional practice to develop. This study seeks to understand professional identity development among pre-service university students studying outdoor leadership. This information will support future outdoor leaders to progress into the outdoor industry with the capacity to create and maintain sustainable careers.

The concept of professional identity is becoming more prominent in the workforce and social discourse. External pressures for professional sustainability, such as work/life balance and remuneration, industry-driven accreditation requirements, the increasing specificity of professional knowledge, and individual expectations for social validation, foster a need to develop a mature professional identity.

A robust professional identity will allow outdoor leaders to find validation for their professional career choices. It will also help provide direction when planning future career decisions and a counterpoint to the challenges outdoor leaders may experience through the social perception of their profession and choice of career. The need to understand how professional identity develops is a core concept for the outdoor industry. In a profession where society relates much of the work undertaken in employment as 'fun', thereby devaluing the efforts of those engaging in the work, it remains vital for those same individuals to have a matured sense of professional identity. This developed sense of identity will add to their professional and personal credibility and the overall credibility of this growing profession.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of professional identity development in emerging outdoor leaders and the relationship of professional identity to professional practice. A key component of this investigation was to extend the understanding of outdoor leadership students by evaluating their perceptions of the profession and the roles of professionals. This study also explored elements in the design and development of curriculum in a university delivering an outdoor leadership course. It is hoped that one outcome of this study's contribution to knowledge will be to assist university educators to support students from outdoor leadership courses to attain a mature professional identity, which will enhance the outdoor industry's overall professional standing.

Specifically, this study was longitudinal and qualitative. Twenty-five participants commenced the research, and 11 completed all data collection phases. The data collection phase of the research lasted three years and followed a cohort of students (study participants) who were interviewed individually at the start, middle, and end of their degrees. There were 47 individual interviews lasting from 21 minutes to 48 minutes in length. The three specific interview rounds were semi-structured, with thematic data analysis of each interview framing the development of the interview guide for the subsequent interview. The individual interviews generated 1,647 specific references that were analysed thematically and organised into five main themes through open, axial, and selective coding processes. The final phase of data analysis involved considering all interview data relating to themes generated within preceding phases and developing new themes based on the complete data set.

The five main themes in the longitudinal study highlighted that the participants initially struggled with conceptualising professional identity. However, as the participants progressed through their course, their curriculum had numerous enablers

and inhibitors affecting the progression of their professional identity development. External factors such as family, friends, and general social perceptions also featured prominently in the data. Significant themes were the practical nature of the learning experiences, exposure to role models, and their academic and theoretical learning experiences. This significance stimulated responses concerning the interrelationship of qualifications versus experience for professional credibility and validation.

This research supports the concept that courses must have high levels of practical learning experiences, with solid theoretical and academic foundations, for university outdoor leadership students to develop a mature professional identity. The students must be introduced to the concept of professional identity early in their curriculum and revisit this concept frequently. The students must also learn how to adequately justify their profession more clearly within society by using developed nomenclature and developing the ability to express what they 'do' for work in a manner that averts the societal perceptions often associated with work that is 'simply' enjoyable and fun. Future research directions and implications of the results at a student level, course curriculum level, and professional level are presented as an outcome of this research.

Keywords: *Outdoor Leadership; Professional Identity; Qualitative; Professional Practice; Curriculum; Outdoor Education; University.*

Acknowledgements

Where do I start?

What a journey… . I once was a university outdoor leader, and now I consider myself an outdoor professional. Even though the title of this research is 'All you do is have fun' and it investigates university outdoor leaders, I can honestly say this PhD journey was not fun. It was hard work, challenging work, and thankless work (very similar to much of the work done by outdoor professionals in their day-to-day work). However, like the participants in this study, I can confirm that I have struggled with my professional identity and validation of my role as an outdoor leader and outdoor professional. Working as an academic (which sets up a professional identity clash – am I an outdoor professional or professional academic, or both???), I have faced considerable devaluing and degrading of my work and my role as an academic and downgrading of the outdoor profession within the university context. This negativity has taken numerous forms, from outright verbal diminishing to structurally undervaluing the effort required to perform my professional work at the behest of the university.

Reflecting on these sentiments, I understand my desire to generate new knowledge in this space. It is not entirely out of animosity but out of the desire to shift societal perceptions about professional outdoor leaders, to communicate the value of our work, and provide sources of validation for emerging university outdoor leaders developing their professional identities. I hope this work has an impact and helps promote the profession of outdoor leadership and the validity of our work.

I thank my family for putting up with my absence, stress, and thinking face. My wife, for filling in the gaps, picking up the pieces and being there throughout the journey. My parents for giving me the space when I was young to explore the outdoors

and develop a love of adventure and spending time out there! For the students who participated in this research, I hope our chats were beneficial and that your discoveries helped you develop your professional identity.

I thank my first co-supervisor, Dr Peter Burridge, for starting this journey with me, sowing the seeds of thought, and being one of my academic outdoor leadership role models. Thanks also go to Prof. Rob Strathdee for stepping in as my co-supervisor for the final stages of my thesis development. And finally, thanks to my supervisor Prof. Anthony Watt, coming in halfway through the journey and being the north arrow I needed to get my bearings, helping to steer the canoe, guide the raft through the rapids, and lead me in packing my PhD backpack with all the right equipment and then metaphorically hiking with me over the knoll to the summit of the mountain (thanks for all of the metaphors and analogies!). I will be eternally grateful for your wisdom, guidance, empathy, time, and commitment to see me through this process.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Potter and Dyment (2016) highlighted that the general population does not fully comprehend the outdoor industry's value to society and that the industry's complexities are not fully understood. Previous research by Martin et al. (2017) reported that the public and individuals outside the field generally perceive outdoor leadership as fun and rarely acknowledge the profession's value. Earlier considerations of the societal value of the profession were posed by Guthrie (2001), who commented that the outdoor industry is not generally valued, recognised, or supported. The timespan between these two observations demonstrates that limited progress toward societal acceptance of work in the outdoor industry as a profession has occurred. Consequently, the outdoor leadership discipline must continue to develop its professional identity and the professional identities of the individuals that choose to work within the industry.

Understanding professional identity and how it develops is important for individuals wishing to establish careers in various professions. In contrast to other identities, professional identity is informed predominantly by formal education (Moseley et al., 2021). Unlike professionalism, which is an outward display of professional behaviours, professional identity is an internal developmental process. Kwon et al. (2022) propose that the conceptualisation of professional identity is a construct that describes how an individual perceives themselves within a professional context and how that internal perception is communicated to others. This suggestion, therefore, implies that every individual in a professional work context will have a professional identity. Consequently, how professional identity develops must be

understood to maximise every individual's ability to develop the most appropriate professional identity for their particular context.

Professional identity in outdoor leadership is an important concept related to the development of individuals within the industry and the industry itself. Plummer (2009) acknowledged that, although the outdoor profession is still seeking a higher level of professional acceptance, the public regularly associates outdoor leadership as a fun activity and therefore struggles to value and validate the profession. This type of overarching sentiment within the social zeitgeist reinforces a need for individuals in the outdoor industry to develop robust professional identities. This professional development phase is critical in supporting these individuals to establish sustainable and fulfilling careers and benefit the outdoor industry through an osmotic growth process.

Outdoor leadership is a challenging, multifaceted role requiring diverse human and technical skills to be fostered and maintained over many years (Lewis & Kimiecik, 2018). Potentially operating across various environments, with multiple activities and a wide array of potential participants and clients, outdoor leaders require a deep understanding of who they are as a professional and how they navigate the complexities of a long and sustained career in the outdoor industry.

Relevant literature has outlined that the main role of a university in contemporary society has gone beyond student education by ensuring that students graduate with specific skills and knowledge sets that align with future employment roles (McArthur, 2011; Parker et al., 2021). As universities move closer toward this rationalist and reductionist outcome, understanding how their students develop professional identity becomes 'a priori'. This movement, in conjunction with the societal challenges around the value of the outdoor industry, reinforces the importance

of understanding how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity.

Based on existing commentary regarding professional identity from within and beyond the outdoor leadership domain, this study endeavours to provide new information gathered through an investigation of the developing professional identity of university outdoor leadership students. Examining this identity development generates outcomes that can enhance education and training programs for university outdoor leaders. Furthermore, understanding the developmental process can assist with designing university curricula that aid the graduation of students who demonstrate a maturing professional identity that supports their attempts to establish a sustainable career in the outdoor industry.

This study involves students sharing their perceptions of the outdoor leadership profession and professionals. The study also considers how these perceptions impact professional identity development and explores the links between professional identity and professional practice. Furthermore, this study will examine the inhibitors and enablers of professional identity development that impact the student.

University outdoor leadership course graduates' understanding of their professional identity will also support the development of the outdoor industry's own professional identity. As the saying goes, 'a rising tide floats all boats', or in this case, 'a rising river floats all canoes'; lifting professional identity across the industry could move it to a position where it receives more validation, acceptance, and attributed value from broader society. It is an important goal of this study that its findings catalyse further research. Subsequent studies will hopefully improve the professional standing of all people who devote their lives to working in the outdoor industry and bringing the joy and wonder of our natural world to people around them.

<center>**Chapter 2- Literature Review**</center>

Chapter Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating specifically to factors impacting how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity. The matters addressed range from the scope of the Australian industry to applied research into the discipline. An alignment of the key insights extracted from the literature review with the research aims is presented.

Definitions

The definitions section of the literature review highlights some of the specific nomenclature and language used within the outdoor industry in Australia that is pertinent to this research. The use of specific terms can be very contextual, with the same word or term being used in different contexts and referring to different things or meanings. Only through education, experience, and acculturation (Dehghan, 2021) can an individual know the appropriate use of these words and terms in the proper context. For example, in some contexts, the term 'outdoor leader' is used interchangeably with 'outdoor educator'. Aygun et al. (2020) support developing an understanding of the industry or role-specific language and terms and confirm that learning appropriate contextual use of these industry-specific terms is an element of developing professional identity.

Outdoor Leadership

The term outdoor leadership is central to the current study. It is, therefore, essential to fully understand the term as presented within the discipline-specific literature and the current study context.

Outdoor leadership as a professional practice can be challenging to define because it is multidisciplinary, exists in various professional domains, and is practised in many settings (Martin et al., 2017). Therefore, fully encapsulating the various career options available to outdoor leaders can be challenging. Lewis and Kimiecik (2018) proposed that outdoor leadership is a dynamic and diverse career path. An outdoor leader may be employed in various environments and have varied responsibilities with many clients. This breadth and diversity make finite definitions of outdoor leadership a challenge to construct. Enoksen and Lynch (2018) advise that outdoor leadership competencies are commonly used as descriptors to define outdoor leadership. A regular presentation of these specific sets of competencies as concepts occurs in discipline-specific literature, with different perspectives highlighted.

Table 1 compares the outdoor leadership competencies and conceptual frameworks detailed in the literature.

Table 1.

Comparison of Outdoor Leadership Competencies and Conceptual Frameworks

Authors	Martin et al. (2017)	Priest and Gass (2018)	Baker and O'Brien (2020)	Marsden (2022)
Framework	8 core competencies in outdoor leadership	Practical, organisational and meta-skills for outdoor leaders	Rethinking the language	Knowledge, skills, and abilities of outdoor education leaders
Key competencies	Foundational knowledge	Instructional skills	Technical skills	Safety
	Self-awareness and professional conduct	Facilitation skills	Affective abilities	Risk Management
	Decision-making and judgement	Flexible leadership style	Conceptual practices	Outdoor education leadership
	Teaching and facilitation	Experience-based judgement		Technical outdoor activities
	Environmental stewardship	Problem-solving skills		Technical outdoor activity instruction
	Program management	Decision-making skills		Participant personal development
	Safety and risk management	Effective communication		Health and wellbeing
	Technical ability	Professional ethics		Community and group development
		Technical skills		Human/Nature relationships
		Safety skills		Outdoor living and journeying
		Environmental skills		Place-based knowledge
		Organisational skills		Environmental science

The detail in Table 1. demonstrates a range of frameworks and competencies with identified overlaps and individual elements in their construction. Considering these specific competencies and frameworks is essential to expressing the breadth and depth of the skills, knowledge and embodied abilities utilised in effective outdoor leadership. The diversity of this set of capabilities can make it challenging to overview outdoor leadership within a specific conceptual framework. Shooter et al. (2009) support this acknowledged difficulty and indicate that it could explain why no universal set of outdoor leadership competencies is valued across all employees and organisational settings.

Kosseff (2012) espouses a slightly different framework to consider outdoor leadership, similar to Baker and O'Brien's (2020) more conceptual list. Instead of a list of competencies, Kosseff presents four fundamental responsibilities of outdoor leaders: minimise risk, minimise impact, maximise learning, and maximise enjoyment. Inherent in the dialogue regarding their framework is a range of the competencies listed in Table 1. However, their framework, in this case, is more conceptual and less specific when compared to Martin et al. (2017), Priest and Gass (2018), and Marsden (2022) above. The constant use of practice-based competencies to define outdoor leadership in the literature further confirms the challenge associated with a holistic, succinct, and accepted definition to cover the vast array of contexts, professions, and domains in which the discipline of outdoor leadership exists.

Outdoor Leader

As indicated above, outdoor leadership is often defined by the range of competencies required to fulfil the role of the outdoor leader. Consequently, this range also makes it difficult to find a definition of an 'outdoor leader' that covers the complete

range of contexts, settings, and roles that an outdoor leader may need to operate within when engaging in their profession.

The term 'outdoor leader' is regularly used throughout the literature. Even without a holistic, contextual definition, the repeated use demonstrates a growing body of knowledge attempting to define the practice (Wagstaff, 2016). Smith and Penney (2010) noted that outdoor leadership primarily occurs outdoors within the natural environment. Martin et al. (2017) expanded this simple definition and added additional qualifying parameters. They proposed that outdoor leadership involved leading individuals or groups into natural settings using some mode of transportation. Further expanding and enhancing this definition would require reverting to adding a list of practice-based competencies essential for individuals to carry out their roles. This reversion only reinforces the challenges faced when trying to define the term outdoor leader in a way that fully comprehends the breadth, depth, contextual variability and challenge associated with the role (Brymer & Gray, 2006).

In Australia, a person who wants to become an outdoor leader and part of the outdoor industry can choose different pathways to gain the required knowledge, skills, and experience (Munge, 2009). These pathways usually involve completing a program of study with either a training organisation or university, depending on the level of qualification they require (Thomas et al., 2019). This study will focus on the development of professional identity for individuals who have selected the university pathway to obtain their qualifications.

Outdoor Education/ Outdoor Educator

As previously indicated, the term 'outdoor educator' is often used interchangeably with 'outdoor leader'. However, 'Outdoor Education' can hold a

different meaning than 'outdoor leadership'. Consequently, if outdoor leadership is concerned with leading groups or individuals outdoors, then outdoor education expands the conceptualisation to include critical elements of learning that occur within the outdoor experiences.

Outdoor education has a rich and long history as a learning pedagogy, with its foundations many centuries old. However, Martin et al. (2017) suggest that a solid definition of outdoor education has been challenging due to the ongoing tension between interpreting outdoor education as an educational method and interpreting outdoor education as explicit educational subject matter. Educational reformer John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) espoused that outdoor experiences using children's senses achieved the best learning, and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasised the benefit of direct experiences (Yildiz, 2021). A seminal definition of outdoor education proposed by Donaldson and Donaldson (1958) stated that "outdoor education was in, about and for the outdoors" (p. 17). References to this statement often signal the emergence of outdoor education in the modern context. A framework to define outdoor education was used by Priest (1986), outlining six main points. Outdoor education is 1. a method of learning; 2. experiential; 3. takes place outdoors; 4. requires the use of all senses and fields; 5. is based on multidisciplinary subjects; and 6. includes relationships involving people and natural resources. Lund (2002) highlighted that outdoor education was a method of experiential learning using all senses and that it primarily (but not exclusively) takes place with exposure to the natural environment. The element of an outdoor education definition reinforcing the use of all senses gained support from Thomas (2021). He stated that "outdoor education is known for its visceral and embodied experiences, employing all the senses" (p.57).

Fiskum and Jacobsen (2013) provide a more contemporary definition, positing that outdoor education articulates as a learning system in both outdoor and indoor environments and uses adventure activities as a setting to foster personal and social growth. Jirásek and Turcova (2017) concur and offer a broad definition espousing that outdoor education encompasses specific educational resources, methods and frameworks based on mediating experiences rather than on information communication.

The concept of outdoor education has been defined and redefined in the literature over a considerable period. Dyment et al. (2018) offered that outdoor education is a contested concept, with diverse definitions that differ in their focus on locations, processes, purposes, and outcomes, creating a challenge to solidify a definition. Supporting this difficulty, Wattchow and Brown (2011) describe the pointlessness of finding a unanimous definition for outdoor education. Quay (2009) proposes that the literature on the outdoor education discipline is diverse in its claims about the precise nature of outdoor education. This diversity, therefore, creates a challenge in providing a robust definition that satisfies a totality of meaning for all stakeholders. Although highlighting conceptual differences, all listed definitions consistently refer to the use of outdoor environments and an element of learning that occurs through the experience. The definitions signal the method or means of approaching the required educational objectives and indicate possibilities for delivering the required content (Nicol, 2002). However, conjecture exists in current definitions regarding outdoor education as a subject versus a methodology. These combined elements position outdoor education as a complex learning area and field of study (Barber, 2021) and a contested body of knowledge and discipline that struggles for legitimacy (Nicol, 2002). This struggle occurs amongst the more

established discipline areas that demonstrate conceptual alignment (e.g., teaching, nursing, and some health care professions).

Outdoor Education in the Australian context is a concept grounded in a school-based curriculum. Outdoor education is a standalone subject in many school jurisdictions in Australia (Dyment et al., 2018). However, delivery of the curriculum area often occurs in association with the health and physical education curriculum (Thomas, 2015). School-based outdoor education uses a variety of delivery models and levels of integration depending on the program scope that the individual school is willing to resource. However, even within a formalised curriculum, outdoor education is still contested for validity, is seen as an activity rather than an academic discipline (Dyment & Potter, 2015), and lacks a status equal to other more scientifically based, or traditional disciplines and curriculum areas.

An individual who teaches or facilitates experiences to address this curriculum is known as an outdoor educator. Thomas et al. (2021b) highlight that an outdoor educator requires a broad set of skills, knowledge, and prior experiences to facilitate experientially-based programs. This individual is often a registered teacher who has received specific educational training surrounding the delivery of outdoor education pedagogy and curriculum. Within this research context, pre-service teachers working in both the education profession and outdoor industry provide a professional identity development context that requires consideration. However, as indicated in recent literature (Enoksen & Lynch, 2018; Polley, 2021; Thomas et al., 2019), the terms outdoor leader and outdoor educator are often conflated or used interchangeably within the Australian Outdoor Industry to describe similar work-related activities. This lack of clarity creates a context in which someone who is not a trained professional educator may use the term outdoor educator to describe themselves. Exploring this

interchangeability through research, Thomas et al. (2019) utilised 'Threshold Concepts' to provide differentiation and clarity regarding the titles and naming conventions used within the outdoor industry to describe an individual's training and subsequent work-related capacities. Many organisations within the outdoor industry profess to provide outdoor education outcomes delivered by outdoor educators; however, many of the individuals providing these outcomes have not received formal training as professional educators.

The Outdoor Industry in Australia

The outdoor industry in Australia is complex (Mann, 2002) and consists of a broad and multifaceted collection of organisations, stakeholders, employers and employees. Humberstone (2000) advised that "The 'outdoor industry' provides or makes available outdoor experiences for leisure and recreational purposes, for educational, youth and management training and therapeutic reasons" (p.21). Although considerable time has elapsed since the publication of this statement, it is still relevant in describing the breadth of the 'outdoor industry' and the contribution of the range of stakeholders regarding the delivery of nature-based experiences. The terms "Outdoor Industry" and "Outdoor Sector" seem to be used interchangeably to identify the collection of entities that provide nature-based experiences. Observation of this interchangeability occurred with the Victorian peak body Outdoors Victoria using the term 'sector' repeatedly on their website (Outdoors Victoria, 2022) and the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory peak body Outdoors NSW & ACT using the term "industry" (Outdoors NSW & ACT, 2022) to describe similar groups and stakeholders. The term outdoor industry will be used within the thesis to represent industry and sector references.

Nationally-based data aggregating the entire outdoor industry's size, scope, and impact is limited. Recent reports regarding the states of Victoria and New South Wales by Marsden Jacob Associates estimate that, across both states, there was a combined $15 billion spent on outdoor recreation and nature-based activities in 2016. These same reports also indicate that 148,000 full-time equivalent jobs are associated with this industry (Marsden Jacob Associates, 2016, 2017). Marsden Jacob Associates (2018) also conducted a nationwide study into the impacts of outdoor recreation. Their study, however, only focused on outdoor recreation and potentially missed capturing data from the full scope of the outdoor industry in Australia. Compared to their Victorian and New South Wales reports, the Marsden Jacob Associates national report details a different range of research and data parameters. This difference was acknowledged as the aggregated total of dollars spent for Victoria and New South Wales ($15 billion) surpassed the national totals ($11 billion), identifying a data misalignment. The data used in these reports does include a range of ancillary entities that would not be considered representative of outdoor leaders. However, a considerable number of the employment roles in the above reports would be considered 'outdoor leaders' and have the knowledge, skills, and experience to facilitate various outdoor experiences with specific outcomes attached to that facilitation.

The term outdoor leadership within the Australian context is often considered a 'catch-all' term that can include many different subgroups of individuals that would consider themselves outdoor leaders. Munge (2009) indicated that the outdoor leadership profession in Australia is broad and diverse. The provision of outdoor experiences requiring an outdoor leader to facilitate them can range from school-based settings (outdoor education) (Dyment & Potter, 2015), recreational settings

(outdoor recreation) (Martin et al., 2017), tourism settings (outdoor nature-based tourism) (Pomfret & Varley, 2019), adventure experiences (outdoor adventure) (Maurer & Curtner-Smith, 2019a), and therapeutic experiences (adventure and nature-based therapy) (Pryor et al., 2021). This range of experiences is catered for by profitmaking and not-for-profit organisations, freelancers, and sole traders. Consumers of these outdoor experiences include individuals, school groups (pre-school to secondary), universities and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, community organisations, and small to large businesses. The diversity of stakeholders highlights the difficulty in capturing the scope and impact of the outdoor industry within Australian society and economy.

It should be noted that this study found limited recent Australian-based literature providing a statistical overview of the outdoor industry and the elements that contribute to its societal impact. The reviewed literature tended to focus on specific areas as listed above (e.g., outdoor education, outdoor recreation) or be very practice focused and concerned with how the industry and stakeholders deliver the product to the consumer.

Historical Definitions of Identity History

The consideration of questions regarding identity has a long history, dating back to ancient times (Côté & Levine, 2016). The concept of identity "speaks to anthropological constants about what it means to be human" (Madsen, 2016, p.242). This contemporary definition, although simple, has evolved over many centuries, with numerous references to 'identity' throughout history. Madsen (2017) suggests that although references to identity have proliferated over recent decades, no simple definition exists that responds to the use of the notion in all contexts. The Greek

philosopher Plato (circa 400 BC) spoke about identity when formulating his theory of metaphysical vision (Gerson, 2004). There are numerous references to identity in the Bible, and Mead (1934) proposed identity concepts that highlight how the self develops by interacting with the environment, resulting in a sociological component of the self (the me) and a more personal component (the I).

Fearon (1999) presented a definition of identity, indicating that identity comprises two platforms – the 'social' and the 'personal'. The social platform is defined by membership rules and characteristic attributes or expected behaviours and/or socially distinguishing features that a person takes special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential. In the personal platform, 'identity' is a current formulation of honour, dignity or pride that tacitly links these to social categories. More recently, Côté and Levine (2016) have proposed three overlapping approaches to identity. They suggested that a political approach has emerged alongside the timeless philosophical and the more recent scientific approach, taking the concept of identity into the "realm of contested privileges" (p.5).

Discussion about identity has centred on sociological and psychological disciplines. However, the academic discourse concerning 'identity' has a broader scope across disciplines and applications. Woodward (2003) used more common identity applications to draw attention to gender, ethnicity, embodiment, and place issues. She proposed that identity has become central to understanding fluidity and fixity within social interaction. While at the same time, the concept of identity has become more prominent in disciplines such as politics (Huddy, 2001), organisational management (Foreman & Whetten, 2002), finance (Easterly, 2006), architecture (House & Mand, 2013), health care (Rivera et al., 2021), and education (Mansfield et al., 2022).

From the early basic understanding of identity to the more applied and specific concepts of identity, the notion has been one that has gathered more and more academic attention. This attention is due to identity's importance for individuals trying to stabilise the self in a world of uncertainties and insecurities (Woodward, 2003). Individuals also form self-perceptions of their role performance in particular groups or contexts (Mansfield et al., 2022). Professional identity has recently been gathering more attention as one of the emerging areas of identity within a specific context.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is an essential facet of many industries and vocations. Becoming a professional is challenging and complex because individuals need to learn their 'practice' and new ways to define themselves (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012). Nyström (2009) suggested that the concept of identity is pivotal to an individual's professional development since work plays a significant part in the development of an individual's sense of self, how they perceive themselves in their occupational context (Kwon et al., 2022), and how they communicate this to other people. Caza and Creary (2016) further support the essential role of professional identity in shaping behavioural and psychological developments for individuals in the workplace as something that cannot be ignored. Similar to aligned identity-based concepts, professional identity is highly contextual and individualised and whereas organisational identities are indicators of where individuals work, professional identities specify the nature of work individuals do and often signify which type of advanced training and skills one possesses (Caza and Creary, 2016). Although the concept has been receiving considerable attention in recent literature (Arroyo, 2021; Ryan & Carmichael, 2016), a

definition that addresses the full complexity and intricacy of such a common concept has not been effectively realised.

Wood et al. (2016) defined professional identity as a relatively stable and lasting collection of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences by which people will define themselves in a professional role. This definition recognises multiple components of identity, which the literature supports (Garza, Moseley, & Ford, 2021; Moseley et al., 2021; Pillen et al., 2013; Wong & Trollope-Kumar, 2014), and also that identity is defined by the individual and, in the case of professional identity, is related to a professional role. This definition, however, does contrast other elements of professional identity definitions that detail that identity is not stable and lasting but somewhat fluid (Moseley et al., 2021), progressive (Wong & Trollope-Kumar, 2014), conflicting (Pillen et al., 2013), complex and dynamic (Sardabi et al., 2018). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) identified this work as a challenging endeavour in which issues of self, professional narrative and discourse, and the influence of workplace contexts must be explored. While Beijaard et al. (2004) implied that people express their professional identity in their perceptions of 'who they are' and 'whom they want to become'. This simple and straightforward constructivist conceptualisation and definition of professional identity presented by Beijaard et al. will be utilised as the primary definition of professional identity throughout this study. Sachs (2001) put forward the concept that professional identity refers to a set of externally ascribed attributes that differentiate one group from another. Although it captures the socialisation concepts associated with identity, it does not fully reflect professional identity's personal and constructivist elements.

Professional identity is one of the multiple identities a person needs to manage. An individual's professional identity is developed when a person starts to interact with

employment. However, laying the foundations for professional identity happens with other identities that begin at birth (Kwon et al., 2022), such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and familial identities. The awareness of professional identity happens gradually through socialisation into communities of practice, and while it is a profoundly personal concept, it is shaped through individuals' engagement within social contexts (Ryan & Carmichael, 2016). Arroyo (2021) concurred with this development of professional identity through socialisation by acknowledging that professional identity does not develop in a vacuum. A confluence of internal and external stimuli come together through a process of exploration within professional contexts where trial and error and ongoing self-reflection (Wald, 2015) assist individuals in conceptualising whom they want to be in that professional setting. Social identity theory proposes that individuals classify themselves and others into various social categories (Hotho, 2008). This proposition complements Wald's perspective by recommending that people move towards identification with their chosen professions through reflective processes which reduce uncertainty and provide self-enhancement and self-conceptualisation. Caza and Creary (2016) suggest that identifying with a valued profession allows individuals to achieve and maintain positive images of themselves. Social identity theorists agree that when individuals identify with their profession, they will incorporate distinct professional values and approaches into their own self-identity as a result of that membership and will take on the various role expectations of their profession.

When considering the professional identity development of outdoor leaders, there is a paucity of literature explicitly addressing how their professional identity develops. Although previous literature presented professional practice development concepts, Wagstaff (2011) suggested a model that links identity elements to

professional development. The author proposed three distinct steps aligned with identity development across an individual's journey toward becoming an outdoor professional. First, outdoor leaders are often motivated by self-satisfaction and self-indulgence. Second, the focus shifts the outdoor leader's orientation toward a service ethic with less emphasis on self-fulfilment. Third, the leader's inclination transitions to a long-term view of their career with a predisposition to a specific area of the industry or even a specific employer of choice. Although this model was not formulated concerning professional identity development, many links can be drawn through the developmental phases with the key concepts of professional identity development (e.g., self-directed through socialisation and fluid development).

Existing literature on outdoor leadership was related to professional identity development based in outdoor education and presented similar ideological alignments with literature from the teaching discipline. Thomas et al. (2019) contemplated how outdoor educators come to know their capacity and validate their ability to fulfil their roles. This concept requires the individual to be aware of who they are as a professional. Polley (2021) investigated how professional currency assisted in promoting outdoor educators' self-determination, self-care, and professional capacity, all of which are concepts that parallel contributory components of identity development. Exploring professional development concepts from an epistemological perspective, Prince (2021) postulated how outdoor educators learn their 'practice' through various processes. This professional development has many parallels with professional identity development because it relates to the overall socialisation of the individual into a community of practice. This literature demonstrates the relationship between professional identity and professional practice within outdoor education and, more broadly, the outdoor industry.

Formulating a fully conceptualised and robust definition of professional identity is one of the main challenges in understanding how an outdoor leader's professional identity develops. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) have proposed that although there is a lack of a formal definition of professional identity, several recurring concepts were apparent in the literature, including the multiplicity of identity, the discontinuity of identity, and the social nature of identity. Professional identity, therefore, can be seen as a multifaceted and complex concept that develops non-linearly and is constructed within a social context.

The Link Between Professional Identity and Professional Practice

The concept that professional identity underpins professional practice for outdoor leadership professionals has had minimal attention in the outdoor leadership literature. Research has typically focused on leadership and desired professional practice outcomes (Drury et al., 2005; Loeffler, 2021; Marchand et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Polley, 2021; Priest & Gass, 2018). Searches of available literature did not uncover any outdoor leadership-based articles using the term professional identity in the title. On the other hand, literature searches in the health care and teaching disciplines uncovered many articles over the last few decades that referenced professional identity in their title.

A review of outdoor leadership literature uncovered that the number of articles referencing professional identity in the body of the article was limited. Polley (2021), when discussing professionalism, professionalisation and professional currency in outdoor environmental education, referred to supporting the development of professional identity for university graduates through involvement in professional organisations and continued professional practice development. Munge and Thomas

(2021) mentioned how outdoor fieldwork allows outdoor educators to practice elements of their professional identity. At the same time, Thomas et al. (2021b) furthered the discussion of outdoor fieldwork by suggesting that fieldwork serves the purpose of creating a community of practice integrated with professional identity. These references related to outdoor educators and primarily focused on professional practice elements rather than professional identity development.

The lack of direct attention to professional identity development in the outdoor leadership literature contrasts with the teaching and health care professions, where professional identity is consistently identified as essential in developing effective practices (Davey, 2013; Felstead, 2013; Khalid & Husnin, 2019; Rus et al., 2013; Serra, 2008). Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2010) proposed that developing teachers' professional identity within 'practice' is essential to professional identity formation. Chan (2001) observed that nursing students often refer to their practice contexts as having the most determinate links to their developing professional identity. Supporting this concept, Arroyo (2021) indicated that teachers define their identity through their experiences. This iterative process of professional identity definition establishes a practice–identity development loop that continues to mature and refine over their career. These identified links are common themes in the health care and teaching literature. Although a gap exists in the outdoor leadership literature, ongoing investigations may assist with the identification of a similar link between identity and practice in the work of outdoor leaders.

Due to this acknowledged gap in the understanding of professional identity formation for outdoor professionals, limited understanding exists of how professional identity develops and supports outdoor leaders' practices. This lack of understanding, therefore, requires establishing identity formation concepts from other aligned

professions. This establishment provides the opportunity to extrapolate and synthesise knowledge from these aligned professions and disciplines into the outdoor leadership profession.

Although further advanced in their societal acceptance as professions, professionals from within teaching and health care professions often construct concepts of professional identity through the altruistic nature of their work (Berry et al., 2019; Çiftçi et al., 2021; O'Connor, 2008; Serra, 2008; Wath & Wyk, 2020). This professional identity formation concept is similar to that of the outdoor professional, as the matured outdoor professional understands that their work is also primarily about other people's needs (Wagstaff, 2011). This similarity positions teaching and health care close to the outdoor profession when viewed ideologically and philosophically. Based on this alignment, the existing literature generated in the teaching and health care areas offers essential knowledge for formulating professional identity perspectives in outdoor leadership.

Ideological Alignment of Disciplines

The outdoor industry in Australia is growing and developing. In 2016 Marsden Jacob Associates (2016) estimated that $7.4 billion were spent on nature-based outdoor activities in Victoria, Australia. They also documented that the nature-based economy supported 71,000 full-time equivalent jobs in Victoria, and $265 million of avoided costs to the Victorian healthcare system were attributable to nature-based outdoor activities. These statistics demonstrate the size, scope, and impact of the outdoor industry and associated stakeholders. While outdoor leaders are part of these statistics, little attention is paid to outdoor leadership or the development of university outdoor leaders' professional identities in the past or current outdoor leadership

literature. Outdoor leadership literature regularly references the development of professional practice. Martin et al. (2017) refer to professional practice as "where the elements of a profession begin to merge with the study of ethics" (p.58), and professional practice is listed by the Institute for Outdoor Learning (2019) as one of their six Career Professional Development (CPD) map areas. Other authors, such as Drury et al. (2005), Polley (2021), and Priest and Gass (2018), reference the importance of professional practice when discussing the development of outdoor leaders. However, there is little specific mention of the concept of professional identity in the reviewed outdoor leadership literature. This lack of discipline-specific literature required this researcher to look outward to other disciplines ideologically aligned with outdoor leadership for specific professional identity-related literature that could illuminate and inform this study.

Consideration of the teaching and healthcare professions occurred when investigating literature on professional identity development. These discipline areas have conducted considerable research on developing professional identity over the last few decades. A large amount of this literature is also contextually specific because it concerns the professional identity development of university students studying to be either teachers or nurses (or other healthcare professionals) (Arroyo, 2021; Ellis & Hogard, 2020; Moseley et al., 2021; Steenekamp et al., 2018; Sutherland et al., 2010; Wong & Trollope-Kumar, 2014). There was considerable ideological alignment between teaching, health care, and outdoor leadership with Bhavsar (2020), Çiftçi et al. (2021), Gicheva (2022), and Wath and Wyk (2020) all referring to high levels of intrinsic motivation and a 'care for others' required of employees within either the teaching or nursing professions. This acknowledgment was aligned with the outdoor leadership literature by Baker and O'Brien (2020), Enoksen and Lynch (2018), and

Stanfield and Baptist (2019). They also signalled the need for concepts surrounding intrinsic motivation and a 'care for others' mentality when choosing to work in the outdoor industry.

Research concerning vocational professions such as teaching and nursing has shown that it is vital for graduates to have a developed concept of their professional identity to ensure appropriate practice and sustainability in the profession (Beijaard et al., 2000; Ellis & Hogard, 2020; Hoeve et al., 2014; Ikiugu, 2003; O'Connor, 2008). Lamote and Engels (2010), in their study of school teachers, expanded on this concept by suggesting that a developed understanding of professional identity is crucial to the success of teachers' practice. They found a strong correlation between school students' success and the maturity of their teacher's professional identity.

An individual's development of their concept of professional identity is linked closely to job satisfaction, occupational commitment, motivation, and self-efficacy (Canrinus et al., 2011). Fagermoen (1997) researched the links between nurses' professional practice and professional identity. This study detailed that developing a level of "required competence" in students is of utmost importance because the practitioners' knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding directly affect the quality of care provided. These listed concepts ideologically align with outdoor leadership and the work of outdoor professionals. When transferred into the outdoor leadership context, this information highlights that graduates with a poor sense of professional identity will be ineffective leaders without sound theoretical, philosophical, and psychological foundations on which to base their practice.

Outdoor Leadership – Professional Recognition

Guthrie (2001) found that the profession of outdoor leadership is not generally valued, recognised, or supported by broader society. This societal perception finds support in Potter and Dyment (2016b), who have suggested that general society easily overlooks the intricacies of work in outdoor leadership and outdoor education. They further note that working in the outdoor industry is not given a similar status to more established disciplines or professions that require similar levels of complexity in the knowledge and skills needed to deliver employment outcomes.

In Australia, literature has considered professional recognition in the outdoor industry over the last few decades. Martin (2000) highlighted five 'signposts' towards a profession: 1. a motive of service beyond self-interest; 2. development of a specialised body of knowledge; 3. a code of ethics; 4. admission to the profession; and 5. public recognition. Mann (2002) explored some of these 'signposts' and quoted a draft motive of service developed by a core of attendees at the 12th National Outdoor Education Conference (NOEC) in 2001. This draft stated, "Through interaction with the/our natural world, outdoor education aims to develop an understanding of our relationships with the environment, others, and ourselves. The ultimate goal of outdoor education is to contribute towards a sustainable community" (p.5). As previously indicated, the term outdoor education can be used interchangeably for meaning and context with other terms and, in some contexts, may refer to only one sector or area of the entire industry. In regards to this concept, Mann (2002) proposed that the umbrella descriptor of the 'Outdoor Profession' be adopted to provide a fully inclusive term.

Potter and Dyment (2016b), who furthered their work in a previous article from 2015, utilised a framework that extended the previous conceptualisation by Martin.

They considered six discipline components as presented by Liles et al. (1996, in Potter & Dyment (2016b)). These components were: 1. Focus of study; 2. World-view; 3. Active research agenda; 4. Reference disciplines; 5. Principles and practices; and 6. Education and professionalism. Although they based the framework on 'outdoor educators', the term could be applied broadly to encapsulate outdoor leadership and attempts towards professionalisation. Potter and Dyment evaluated the position of the outdoor discipline using this framework. They argued that the discipline was well advanced in the areas of focus of study, world-view, and research, but lacked in the application of reference disciplines, the establishment of principles and practices and working to establish and promote the profession's standing.

Many researchers, including Martin and McCullagh (2011) and Martin (2010), identified this lack of value as partly due to the profession struggling to gain acknowledgement from the broader society that outdoor programs achieve effective learning and development for the people who participate. Consequently, the profession is not afforded similar status to other aligned disciplines. There is a perception that the activities outdoor professionals facilitate appear to be fun and, consequently, cannot be considered work. Researchers have also suggested that some difficulties arise because of the breadth and diversity of what the outdoor profession encompasses (Lugg, 2004; Nicol, 2002).

Whilst displaying most of the hallmarks required for recognition as a profession (Jenkins & Pigram, 2003; Martin et al., 2006), the outdoor profession still strives to attain a more substantive professional acceptance (Plummer, 2009). A range of authors has suggested several reasons for this struggle for professionalisation (Guthrie, 2001; Mann, 2002; Polley, 2021; Potter & Dyment, 2016b; Thomas et al., 2019), including open entry into employment, a lack of common curriculum standards

in post-secondary institutions, and the ongoing debate concerning accreditation and certification of employees within the industry. These concerns, coupled with the lack of public support for the claimed outcomes of outdoor recreation/education programs, create an ongoing struggle for emerging university outdoor leaders within the industry. The struggle is further exacerbated when these emerging leaders come through a higher education pathway under considerable and increasing scrutiny due to the time and perceived cost involved with program delivery (Potter & Dyment, 2016). These individuals' educational contexts may already be inhibiting their professional identity development.

For emerging university outdoor leaders, the struggle for validity also concerns the individual's ability to develop their professional identity to support the profession to be favourably recognised. This positive recognition will assist in overcoming the public opinion based on postmodern capitalistic thought, which mires employment in the outdoor industry in concepts relating to fun and play (Martin et al., 2017), not education, personal development and other concepts deemed of 'value' by broader society.

Priest and Gass (2018) viewed developing a sound professional identity as crucial to the effectiveness of the outdoor leader. The role of the outdoor professional is often multifaceted, drawing on multiple knowledge sets and discipline-based understandings, with diverse and complex professional practice concepts required to be effective. Concepts such as high levels of responsibility, the need to constantly juggle safety, group management, leadership, program objectives, ethical issues, decision-making, environmental conditions, and personal needs are all evident in existing research (Cotton et al., 2010; Drury et al., 2005; Gunn, 2006; Guthrie, 2001; Marsden et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2006; Shooter et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2021a).

This evidence demonstrates the complex nature of these professional practice requirements. Furthermore, research evidence has also revealed that congruent with the current research surrounding the teaching and health care professions, support for professional identity development is required for emerging outdoor professionals to develop a mature sense of their professional identity (Polley, 2021). Doing so will support their professional practice and ensure they develop a sustainable career in the outdoor industry.

Overview of Identity and Outdoor Leadership Research

Consideration and examination of research within this literature review are valuable to this study. The review involves the interrogation of relevant and complementary research methods and findings. The following process will contextualise relevant research: a brief overview, an explanation of the methodology, a review of outcomes, and alignment to the study.

Research Examining the Identity Development of Higher Education Students

Yu et al. (2021) conducted a validation study considering undergraduates' preparedness for practice and its association with professional identity and perception of the educational environment. Their research focussed on medical students preparing for clinical practice. The study consisted of four questionnaires requiring responses from the participants. The timing of the survey delivery was within four months of the participants entering their clinical rotations. The first survey the participants had to complete was the initial questionnaire tool to collect descriptive demographic information for the researchers to review. The Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale (MCPIS), originally developed to measure professional

identity in healthcare students, was also used. The other surveys utilised were the Preparedness for Hospital Practice Questionnaire (PHPQ) and the Scan of Post-graduate Educational Environment Domains (SPEED). Invitations for participants to be involved in a subsequent three-year longitudinal study were made after participants completed these survey instruments. A total of 129 students from the same institution completed the surveys.

Results of the Yu et al. study indicated that students demonstrating higher levels of preparedness possessed notably better professional identity. Findings reinforced the need to understand the links between undergraduates' professional identity and professional practice. Outcomes also demonstrated that students with strong professional identities display higher levels of preparedness regarding their capacity to utilise their practice in professional settings.

Yu's study highlighted the importance of collecting descriptive demographic data on the cohort to give the researcher an understanding of its context. This quantitative approach used a variety of instruments for data collection. The subsequent use of a longitudinal method to capture data regarding professional identity concepts can serve as a solid methodology for collecting data concerning professional identity development in undergraduate students. A central aspect of the study was incorporating a sample size that could support increased reliability and trustworthiness. However, as students volunteered for this survey, a selection bias may have been apparent.

An important Australian study by Jackson (2017) considered the development of pre-professional identity in undergraduates through Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The study involved a qualitative approach, using structured reflections from two distinct periods. The sample included 105 undergraduate business students. Jackson

defined WIL as "experiential learning, cooperative education and work-based learning; it is the interweaving of practical work experience with classroom learning" (p.835). The study aimed to raise awareness of the importance of developing professional identity to improve the transition of new graduates into the workplace, and to examine the role of professional identity for undergraduates.

The research participants in the Jackson study were required to write two structured reflections of 750 words, each considering professional identity development during the latter stages of their WIL experience. These reflections, when aggregated, created the data set for analysis. The WIL components situated the required reflections towards the end of the students' degrees and integrated the reflections as assessments forming part of the students' coursework. The data analysis used a thematic approach with inductive coding to analyse the first data set from the first reflection. The resultant analysis from the first reflection data was used to create a thematic framework. The second set of reflections utilised this framework as a base and underwent analysis through a deductive coding process. Results of the student responses highlighted that they predominately agreed that time spent engaged in a workplace environment during their studies was beneficial to developing their professional identity. Opportunities to demonstrate their technical and non-technical capacity and receive direct and real-time feedback were highly appreciated. The capacity to utilise role models to understand industry and workplace requirements was essential to their ability to conceptualise professional norms. The students also noted that participating in workplace environments developed their professional confidence in ways that classroom learning could not.

The Jackson study provides an example of good research practices in professional identity. First, the context of examining a single Australian university

supported a case study approach. Second, an emphasis on field-based learning components within the curriculum was highlighted as a critical element of course delivery, reinforcing the importance of WIL. Third, the study was qualitative and thematic, using inductive and deductive coding. Fourth, Jackson's study also involved a large sample relative to the case study consideration of course experience related to professional identity development. However, the study only provided a snapshot of professional identity development towards the end of the students' course. The timespan for data collection surrounded a 100-hour WIL opportunity. Collecting data concerning a student's professional identity development over a short timeframe may not have provided data for analysis as robust as data produced from a longitudinal study. A longitudinal study could provide more time for developmental changes to be processed and reported on by the student.

Sudtho et al. (2015) researched using the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism to investigate teachers' professional identity. The methodology for the study used one participant as a case study and approached the case study from a narrative analysis perspective. The individual case study focused on a pre-service teacher studying for an undergraduate degree. They suggested that "in light of the complexities involved in examining a teacher's professional identity formation, qualitative approaches, such as the interview, are appropriate tools to construct collages of how teacher-identity shifts and changes over time" (p.1156). There were 15 semi-structured interviews scheduled throughout the pre-service teacher's practicum experiences. This longitudinal approach to data collection ensured that appropriate developmental data would be captured, thereby providing a rich data set for analysis.

Although very pedagogically focussed, the research results of Sudtho et al. reinforced that people act based on the meaning they attribute to things, that the meaning is derived from social interaction and that the meaning individuals have will change based on interpretive processes. These results aligned closely with concepts from the symbolic interactionist framework used in the study. The methodology used in the Sudtho et al. study demonstrates the effective use of qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews, to investigate teachers' professional identity development. The symbolic interactionist framework used in their research also highlights the applicability of this specific framework as a lens through which to investigate professional identity development. The longitudinal nature of the data collection validated the appropriateness of this methodology when trying to capture robust data regarding an individual's development over time.

Ryan and Carmichael (2016) investigated the shaping (reflexive) of student professional identities across an undergraduate degree program. Their study used a longitudinal design and a small sample of 10 students from an Australian university. The qualitative research incorporated reflective journals that the students completed as part of their standard assessments in each of the four clinical placement subjects over a three-year timeframe. The resultant data was coded through deductive methods and applied discourse analysis utilising linguistic evaluation of the students' reflective journals. The research results utilised a framework that grouped the students into four different groups based on their use of language in the reflective journals. These groupings also categorised the students through reflexive modes that carried various indicators aligned with professional identity elements. A prominent outcome of the research was that dialogic and collaborative reflexive strategies were identified as powerful ways to help undergraduate students to shape their professional identities.

The researchers suggested that reflexive self-assessment strategies could form part of a thorough method for developing healthy and flexible professional identities within undergraduate programs. A curriculum-based result from the study also indicated that opportunities for deep and critical reflection are needed for students to shape reflexive professional identities. However, the socialising and sharing of these opportunities among the student cohort could lead to a robust and developmental focussed understanding of self.

The small sample in the Ryan and Carmichael study was acknowledged as a limitation. However, the longitudinal data collection methodology indicated that understanding reflexive modes may be a valuable aspect of professional identity development for consideration in undergraduate teaching. Collecting qualitative data over a three-year timeframe also allowed the researchers to track the students' professional identity development accurately and would facilitate greater data reliability than if collected through a cross-sectional study design.

Outdoor Related Research Aligned with this Study

Potter et al. (2012) investigated the characteristics of a successful university degree program in Outdoor Adventure Education. The sample consisted of 38 academics from various countries and institutions. This quantitative research used a single interview utilising 38 structured questions scored on a Likert scale with a five anchor range for each question. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the variables in the collected data, and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and t-tests were used to analyse the presented data. The results of this research identified the following main points as critical characteristics agreed upon by the academics in the study. First, the degree must be provided with a budget sufficient for delivery. Second, the

programs must maintain quality and rigour to generate respect from other academic disciplines. Third, the teaching staff must spend time in the field with their students. The final point relates to the importance of the department/faculty/college leader (e.g., Dean) advocating for the outdoor programs to senior administrators.

Potter et al. provided an understanding of practical research strategies for investigating professional identity within Australia's outdoor leadership higher education context. Although the data was collected from the academics teaching in the programs, it could be assumed that the academics would have a good understanding of the successful characteristics of an outdoor leadership university degree. Therefore, this understanding would extend to knowledge of what helps to support students in those programs to develop their professional identity. Extrapolating the presented results could support potential qualitative student responses regarding their individual experiences of professional identity development within the same context. The small sample size in the research resulted in low statistical power. This result indicates a challenge with a quantitative methodology for the desired research outcome. The findings also reinforce that qualitative methodologies may be more suited to investigations surrounding professional identity development utilising a small sample size.

Enoksen and Lynch (2018) conducted research titled 'Learning Leadership: Becoming an Outdoor Leader'. Their study contained design elements to examine graduates' understanding of the process of 'becoming' an outdoor leader as distinctly different from 'being' an outdoor leader. Many elements of their study parallel professional identity development for students wanting to become outdoor leaders. The exploratory study utilised an interpretive hermeneutic methodology to allow understandings of first-time leadership to become apparent through the data. The

study sample consisted of five participants interviewed at least seven months after the students had graduated from their degree programs. The time gap post-graduation was used to mitigate any response bias that could arise from a teacher-student relationship. Design elements of the research used semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews to collect the required data. The researcher coded the transcribed data through an iterative process to condense the meanings expressed by the participants. The coding structure was further developed through an iterative process of interviewing, transcribing, reading and interpreting in conjunction with reading associated literature.

Enoksen and Lynch suggested that learning to become an outdoor leader required a highly experiential pedagogy, especially in the early stages of leadership education. The results revealed that curriculum programs introducing leadership should focus on the individual's self-development. Early attempts at engaging in leadership must occur within transformational spaces that encourage students to try the process and make space for the students in which it is legitimate to feel uncomfortable.

The Enoksen and Lynch research employed highly effective strategies to draw in-depth information from participants regarding their development. The purposeful interview design allowed for the systematic exploration of concepts. The small sample size facilitated opportunities for the researchers to spend time with each participant, allowing for sufficient depth and trustworthiness of the collected data. These valuable study design elements resonate for the development of future research projects investigating the development of outdoor leaders.

Summary

Although identity has gained much attention in the literature, it has been a developing concept diversifying into many disciplines and applications over time (Snell et al., 2020). This diversification has created a concept referred to as professional identity, which takes identity-based knowledge, theories, and concepts, and applies them to a professional context.

The term professional identity has multiple meanings throughout the literature. However, when distilled, most of these meanings concern the individual and who they are and want to become within a professional context. When investigating the development of the professional identity of outdoor leaders, the acknowledgment that outdoor leaders have a complex role in an industry that struggles for professional acceptance and recognition (Martin et al., 2017) is apparent. While the link between identity and practice is highly evident in the teaching and health care literature, it has gained minimal attention in contemporary outdoor leadership literature. Minimal discipline and profession-specific literature that directly and overtly considers how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity has been identified. Research from the ideologically aligned teaching and health care professions and disciplines has considered professional identity development over the last few decades. This research can provide a broad foundation of knowledge, frameworks, and conceptualisations to apply to the outdoor leadership profession and discipline.

More research is required to examine how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity. The literature reviewed has inferred that future research into this concept would be most effective with methodological design features that are: longitudinal and able to track students' professional identity development over

the entirety of their degree duration; investigate a sample size that allows for an accurate representation of the phenomena through case study to emerge, and that is appropriate for the context under investigation; use descriptive demographic information to guide the initial phases of the research; collect qualitative data through a semi-structured face-to-face interview process; utilise a thematic coding method to analyse the data with both inductive and deductive elements; and support the use of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework to overlay the research.

This study, therefore, will investigate the development of professional identity in emerging outdoor leadership professionals through the use of the literature-supported methods as outlined above. Using these methods will ensure that the chosen context receives full consideration, data collection happens through a reliable and rigorous process, and foregrounding the welfare of the participants occurs in ethical research practice. The current research will also ensure that collected data is analysed and evaluated through an academically appropriate application and that the results and discussion accurately represent the aggregated data. Finally, the delivery of the study is in a format that can be understood by those seeking to explore this research. The complete thesis will contribute to and stimulate the much-needed discourse concerning this issue and create new knowledge surrounding the investigated concepts that can address gaps in the current literature. This study will provide knowledge to invested stakeholders to support university outdoor leadership students to develop their professional identity, graduate into the outdoor industry, and create sustainable career paths in their chosen profession.

Chapter 3 – Qualitative Methodology

Chapter Introduction

This chapter focuses on using a qualitative case study methodology as an appropriate means of obtaining data related to student perceptions of identity development. The qualitative case study approach and symbolic interactionist framework are used for analysing longitudinal, semi-structured interviews that follow students across three years of an outdoor leadership degree. This research provides insights into professional identity development in emerging outdoor leaders and the relationship of professional identity to outdoor leadership practices. Understanding this connection will help inform the design and development of education and training programs for outdoor leaders. A review of current literature examining appropriate methodologies was used to support the implementation of a semi-structured interview process with a cohort of students engaged in a university-level outdoor leadership course (study participants). This 'methodology' chapter justifies and explains the qualitative methods used in this study.

Justification for the Methodology

The following sections explore paradigms used to frame the research methodology and consider the use of a case study in the current context. The research aims for this study are presented, followed by a further justification of the methodology based on the research aims.

Paradigm Framework for the Research

Current research methods have evolved from the scientific method, with a theoretical positivistic perspective at its core, to methods that allow for more interpretative and constructivist elements. Sutton (1993) proposed that positivism is not a term easily defined, nor has it been used consistently. However, Given (2016) provided a concise definition of positivism as a concept grounded in a realist perspective, whereby a single reality or universal truth is believed to exist and can be measured. This perspective links quantitative research methodologies that seek to find the "answer" through this more positivistic way of inquiry.

Qualitative methods imply interpretive procedures with relativistic assumptions (Sutton, 1993) and depart from the positivist base by situating their philosophical underpinnings at the constructivist end of the spectrum. Constructivism assumes that multiple contextual perspectives exist to form the 'truth' (Hays & Singh, 2012) and that this multiplicity prevents the 'universal truth' from existing. Given (2016) concisely contends that constructivism is grounded in the belief that people construct their reality based on how they see the world. Therefore, different approaches can be more appropriate for exploring different phenomena, with the constructivist perspective being valuable for examining the complexities of human interaction and behaviours. Constructivism is applicable as a paradigm to guide this study because identity development is influenced by human interaction and behaviour.

As Locke (1989) proposed, qualitative research is a systematic, pragmatic strategy for answering questions about people bound within a social context. It is noted that all methodological approaches attempt to answer the question of 'what is going on here?' (Suter, 2012). Qualitative research, however, diverges from more positivist types of scientific inquiry in two main areas: first, the methods employed (how to do

it), and second, the assumptions made by the researcher (how they view the world). Qualitative research attempts to capture meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) by framing questions starting with open concepts like 'what', 'why' and 'how'. Through this exploration of open-ended concepts, the researcher can make sense of the meaning that a person is trying to convey.

In quantitative research, setting or defining the variables and design often occurs before the data is collected. However, a more flexible approach toward the design and associated variables is required in qualitative research to consider the data collection context (Berg & Latin, 2008). This flexibility in qualitative research often requires high levels of interpretation by the researcher; therefore, concepts supporting an interpretive approach find frequent alignment with qualitative research. An interpretive approach maintains that the collective thinking and actions of the participants have a meaning that can be uncovered by examining the context in which that thinking and those actions occurred.

An interpretive approach to qualitative research attempts to explain people's behaviours regarding the meaning it holds for them (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Consistent with this concept, Merriam (2009) proposed that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. This study will use the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism to interpret the behaviours and meanings appearing through the data. Blumer (1969) refined symbolic interactionism into three core tenets: first, that people act toward things, including each other, based on the meanings they have for them; second, through social interaction with others, these meanings are derived; and third, that these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and

handle the objects that constitute their social worlds. The qualitative aspects of this research project focus on how the study participants acted within the bounded context of their degree studies, how they interact with their peers and staff, and how they construct meaning from their interactions and experiences that relate to professional identity development. Blumer's symbolic interactionism theoretical framework is highly congruent with the way the researcher has implemented this project and is, therefore, an ideal lens through which to view the entirety of the research process.

Case Study

The design of this study (conducting a case study with a cohort of university students (study participants)) is intended to provide new insights into the role of developing professional identity in emerging outdoor leaders and the relationship of professional identity to outdoor leadership practices.

Baxter and Jack (2008) and Flick (2011) suggested that qualitative research utilising a case study can help explore professional practice and identity concepts. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that when considering a case study, the case is a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context, which then, in effect, is the unit of analysis. Therefore this proposition suggests that using a case study as the unit of analysis for this study was applicable. This concept utilises the following points supplied by Yin (2003): (a) the focus of the research is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the research; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions as you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. As this research is investigating 'how' and 'why' students develop professional identity, and the researcher has the role of collecting data through an interview process which addresses a number of contextual issues

without manipulating context for the students involved, it further strengthens the use of a case study as a suitable unit of analysis for this study.

Within this project, the qualitative analysis will investigate the aggregated responses of the entire case. However, it is essential to address the responses of individual students in the case to ensure the depth of analysis occurs and provides a basis for the richness of the holistic interactions appearing in the analysis. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested the concept of a single case with embedded units to add depth to the data analysis of a case study. As this study is concerned with how university outdoor leadership students (the case/unit of analysis) develop their professional identity, it is essential to look at the individual students within the case study as embedded sub-units of analysis. Baxter and Jack (2008) viewed the capacity to look at these sub-units within the larger case as very powerful, given that data can be analysed in the following ways; within the individual sub-units (within-case analysis); between the individual sub-units (between case analysis); and across all of the sub-units (cross-case analysis).

This capacity to view the data interactions from these different perspectives will add depth and richness to the analysis while better highlighting the case in the study context. Therefore, for this research, the unit of analysis is the case study, and the individual students embedded in the case study are also units of analysis.

Research Aims

The general purpose of this study is to provide new insights into the development of professional identity in emerging outdoor leaders and the relationship of professional identity to outdoor leadership practices. Understanding this relationship will help enhance adequate education and training programs for outdoor leaders.

The specific aims of this study are:

1. To further understand who outdoor leadership students are.

2. To identify university outdoor leadership program students' perceptions of the outdoor leadership profession and the roles of outdoor leadership professionals

3. To identify how a group of university outdoor leadership students' perceptions of the profession and roles of outdoor professionals relate to their professional identity development.

4. To identify how a group of university outdoor leadership students link the development of their professional identity throughout a course to their understanding of professional practice in outdoor leadership

5. To explore the enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development for a group of university outdoor leadership students throughout their course.

Justification of Methodology Based on Aims.

This study aims to understand how professional identity development evolves for undergraduate students studying outdoor leadership. The qualitative data analysis of the students' assumptions, beliefs, values, and meanings, that form in the context of their developing professional identity, provides evidence to demonstrate the importance of professional identity and ways to support its development. The research design incorporates a protocol that involves following the study participants over the three years of their study and is firmly located within a longitudinal case study framework. This conceptual location is congruent with Jones, Torres, and Arminio

(2006), who recommended that case study methodology is frequently used in higher education research related to student development. Using a case study received support from Hays and Singh (2012) as the optimal research approach when trying to answer 'how' and 'why' questions. This study explores the development of university outdoor leadership students' professional identity by considering 'how' and 'why' this development occurs. Further justification supporting the critical nature of the methodology employed for this study is provided by Lynch (2012a, 2012b), where she indicated the need for more critical research surrounding outdoor leadership/education/recreation, as opposed to the more frequent outcome-based research more prevalent in the outdoor disciplines.

This study combines a case study with the use of the symbolic interactionist theoretical framework, enabling documentation of the change seen within social groups and the identification of significant systems that influence that change (Morse et al., 2009). This approach allows the explication of what is happening in a particular setting. Identifying effective systems creating change among the study participants will allow the research aims to be addressed and answered.

The qualitative methodology described has allowed the collected data to be thick, in-depth, and substantive. Using a case study to achieve this objective is congruent with Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011). They imply that case studies allow for an in-depth exploration of the uniqueness and complexity of specific phenomena within the social context and from a wide range of perspectives. To provide interpretation of the 'human experience' in this project, elements of research aim 1 were addressed through the collection of a range of descriptive demographic data. This descriptive data collection also allowed the researcher to build a picture of the demographic composition of the study participants. For research aims 2 – 5, the

researcher decided not to use certain quantitative methodologies within the case study, such as questionnaires generating scaled responses to provide data that would translate into numerical responses. These types of questionnaires would not allow for the deep or hidden information of the 'experience' to emerge. Therefore, a qualitative methodology, utilising a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews, was selected to gather the data required to satisfy the aims and solve the research problem for research aims 1 - 5.

The research can be defined as longitudinal by virtue of the length of the case study, comprising three face-to-face interviews and one data collection survey over three years (Flick, 2011). Kumar (1996) posited that a longitudinal study helps determine a pattern of change over time and provides a valuable tool when the researcher needs to collect factual information. However, Kumar (1996) also observed that the conditioning effect is a potential downfall of longitudinal study design. This effect describes a situation where the sample participant may begin to know what is expected through multiple contacts and exposure to the same interviewer and questions. They may respond to questions without thought, lose interest in the study, and not answer to the fullest extent of their knowledge. While this researcher acknowledged this conditioning effect, it was deemed to be of little concern (and was minimised) because the frequency of contact was annual (therefore a considerable time between the interviews), and the interview guides used mostly different questions across the three interviews.

The longitudinal case study approach followed the study participants across their three-year degrees, interviewing individual participants in their first, second and third years. This longitudinal approach partially negated issues relating to participant recall. Grotpeter (2008) posited that participant recall issues could impact data

collection when participants are required to recall memories and events from a considerable period before their questioning. Following the study participants throughout their studies ensured that they would only have to recall memories from no more than one year previous to any interview.

Qualitative Research

The previous section outlined concepts regarding qualitative research. While evidence shows a difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods, there remains some conjecture about how to define and consider qualitative research.

For this study, the preferred definition of qualitative research is developed by combining the concepts suggested by Nkwi, Nyamongo, and Ryan (2001) and Guest et al. (2013). They posit that qualitative research involves working with text, images, and sounds and does not wholly rely on data indicating ordinal values. This definition implies that working with the specified data types will firmly locate the methods utilised in interpretive science. While this location ensures that this type of qualitative analysis contains a minimal amount of quantitative measurement, standardisation and mathematical technique (Sarantakos, 1993), it does not preclude using these methods, as required, to add trustworthiness and robustness to the findings. This notion finds support from Hays and Singh (2012), who explained that, despite the polarisation between qualitative and quantitative methods, qualitative researchers across many disciplines are using numbers to supplement their studies and as a way to improve consistency in results. This use of numbers has been applied in this study to quantitatively describe the study participants and provide some baseline demographic data to assist in the analysis of the qualitative data.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that most research problems could be studied with a diverse range of methodological techniques, all of which might be deemed trustworthy. However, once the researcher has framed the research question through their specific 'lens', certain methodologies will lend themselves to the question's resolution. Therefore, a qualitative approach was determined as applicable based on a sound understanding of the conceptual and contextual framework of the study aims.

Research Setting and Scope of the Case

Lichtman (2010) suggested that it is up to the researcher to identify the case and set limits and boundaries when using case study methodologies. Therefore when establishing a case study with sub-units as the unit of analysis, it is also essential to establish boundaries and define what the case will not include (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It is crucial to ensure that the research aims and the process towards their resolution are possible within the researcher's resources. Putting boundaries around the case will also ensure that the correct methods for accurately capturing and analysing the appropriate data are chosen.

For this study, the sample selection occurred from students enrolled at a university commencing their study of outdoor leadership-related units in 2013. The students had an enrolment in one of the following courses:

- Bachelor of Sport and Recreation Management (Outdoor Recreation Leadership Major) (ABSR): 3-year degree, with a total of 9 units of outdoor leadership-related content.
- Bachelor of Education (Outdoor Education Major) (ABED): 4-year degree, with a total of 8 units of outdoor leadership-related content.

- Bachelor of Applied Science (Physical Education Major) (HBPY): 3-year degree, with a total of 6 units of outdoor leadership-related content.

- Bachelor of Youth Work (Outdoor Recreation Leadership Major) (ABYR): 3-year degree, with 8 units of outdoor leadership-related content.

Case Context

The context for this case study is partially outlined in the description and contextualisation of the participants, with results demographically and contextually describing the study participants. This description has been integral in informing the qualitative analysis in this chapter. Through years of working in the industry, this researcher has had numerous personal experiences and gathered anecdotal evidence regarding the study participants. However, the data presented through the description and contextualisation of the participants provided an evidence-based set of information to use and inform the qualitative data analysis in this chapter.

Course Context for the Sample Cohort (Study Participants).

The four courses specified in the previous section have similarities in their delivery and some specific differences. The following information identifies some similarities and differences to contextualise the research participants' breadth of courses.

The Bachelor of Sport and Recreation Management - Outdoor Recreation Leadership Major (ABSR) had nine out of 24 core units related to Outdoor Leadership, with the potential to take another five elective units directly related to outdoor leadership throughout the degree. For the students choosing this degree, the remainder of the units to complete are aligned with knowledge related to Sport

Management and Community Recreation. For a course delivery plan, please see Appendix I.

For students in the ABSR course, their employment outcomes fell predominantly into the outdoor recreation, outdoor education, and adventure sports industries, in specific roles such as freelance outdoor adventure guide, residential campsite manager/programmer, outdoor environmental interpretation, and eco or adventure tourism. A proportion of students enrolling in this degree will also use it as a stepping-stone to becoming an outdoor education teacher within a secondary school setting (by completing a Master of Teaching).

The Bachelor of Education - Outdoor Education Major (ABED) had eight specialisation units related to Outdoor Leadership out of 32 units available in the degree. The remaining 24 units were associated with curriculum and pedagogy knowledge development, in-school practicum, and completing another minor course of study (e.g., Maths, Science, English). ABED graduates commonly intend to take roles as Outdoor Education teachers in secondary school settings when they enrol in their chosen course. For a course delivery plan, please see Appendix J.

The Bachelor of Youth Work - Outdoor Recreation (ABYW) had six elective outdoor leadership focussed units within the course of 24 units. The remainder of the course comprised units related to youth work. Most graduates would enrol in a Graduate Diploma of Education to prepare them to teach in secondary schools, with a specialisation in student welfare. An alternative would be to find employment in a range of settings that involve working with youth in social justice, mental health, or community welfare settings. For a course delivery plan, please see Appendix K.

The Bachelor of Applied Science – Physical Education-secondary (HBPY) had six elective outdoor leadership focussed units within a total of 24 units. The remainder

of the course comprised units related to sport and physical education. Most graduates from this course enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Education to prepare them to teach in secondary schools, with a specialisation in physical education or outdoor education. For a course delivery plan, please see Appendix L.

Procedure

The procedure section initially outlines general information associated with the sample, recruitment and ethical considerations. Details of the data collection, interview and trustworthiness procedures are also presented.

Sample Participants

Sampling Procedure to Build the Case

For this study, the method of selecting the sample was straightforward. Patton (2002) supported this straightforward method by suggesting that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. The research had parameters establishing the context of the case, meaning that the sample needed to come from students studying outdoor leadership. The process of selecting study participants was accessible and comprehensible to the wider student cohort. The participants were selected from a cohort of higher education students from the same university. They were all from the same year level and predominately studied the same units/unit sets. Given (2016) recommended this style of purposive sampling for qualitative research and suggested that qualitative projects should use sampling processes designed to recruit people to ensure that the research aims can be addressed. In this research, purposive sampling was used to establish the sample for the case study to ensure that the depth of data

collected would enable the exploration of the phenomena and allow for conceptual and theoretical explanations of the topic under investigation.

Although this type of purposive sampling provided the flexibility required in this study, Catalla (2006) identified certain issues and suggested that making conclusions about the population under investigation can be challenging. Findings may be accurate for the sample studied but may not necessarily hold for others in the population. This study investigates outdoor leadership students from one institution, and its findings will relate to these students. However, similar outdoor leadership students at different institutions may not produce the same findings through a replicated study.

Sample Size

The starting sample size for this study was 25 students (this reduced to 22 students for the first data collection phase) selected from a wider cohort of students commencing courses with outdoor leadership units as potential options in their delivery plans (see previously discussed courses). Tracking these study participants as they progressed through the outdoor leadership stream of units occurred over the following three academic years (2013 to 2015). The complete enrolled cohort of students commencing their outdoor-related studies in 2013 was 75, with the sample size (study participants) constituting one-third of that cohort. The sample size was set to support an appropriate representation of student diversity was captured and to allow the complexity of the investigated phenomena to emerge during the research process (Bowen, 2008).

The researcher has worked in this university setting for over 15 years and anticipated that, over the life of the study, there would be an approximately 50%

attrition of the study participants selected. Table 2. identifies the number of study participants remaining from the original sample over the course of the study.

Table 2.

Number of Students Participating in the Data Collection

Total Enrolled Cohort Size from which Sample was Selected	Number of Students Completing Base Line Demographic Data Phase 1	Number of Students Completing Year 1 Interview 1 Phase 2	Number of Students Completing Year 2 Interview 2 Phase 3	Number of Students Completing Year 3 Interview 3 Phase 4
75	22	18	14	11

Method to Recruit Sample

All first-year students undertaking outdoor leadership-related studies in 2013 were invited to participate in the study and provided with a 'consent form for participants involved in research' and an 'information to participants involved in research' form upon their attendance at orientation day in late February 2013 (Appendices A and B). The doctoral supervisor was responsible for providing an overview of the study and answering any questions from the students. The students interested in participating in the study were asked to return their signed consent forms at the first course lecture one week later.

In a subsequent lecture, the doctoral supervisor gave the students an additional chance to ask questions concerning the study and then indicate their willingness to participate by submitting the signed consent form. Twenty-five students completed the required paperwork to participate in the research, with 22 completing phase 1 of the data collection.

Pseudonym Details

The list of 18 names below (Table 3.) represents all participants interviewed in Phase 2 of the data collection. The staff names represented (2 + researcher) are included because the students referred to these staff during their interview responses. The sample group decreased to 14 participants for Phase 3 and then to 11 participants for phase 4 of the data collection. The attrition of participants of the sample group throughout the research primarily occurred due to participants choosing to leave the course of study to move to another degree program, or leave university study altogether.

Table 3.

Pseudonyms for the Study Participants and Staff

Ange	James	Renee
Amanda	John	Rosa
Aaron	Jack	Shaz
Beth	Jim	Sam
Carl	Nat	Stella
Dave	Paula	Tim
Researcher	Mark (staff)	Evan (staff)

Ethical Considerations

The ethics board reviewed and approved this study (approved application number HRE12-313). This study involved a university lecturer studying a cohort of students (study participants) over three years as they progressed through their

degrees. The study presented a potential power relationship and conflict of interest issue because the researcher was involved in delivering educational outcomes for the study participants.

The nature of the identified power relationship issue was that members of the sample knew that the researcher was the stream coordinator of the Outdoor Recreation/ Education stream/ specialisation within the outdoor leadership-related courses. Although the researcher was not directly responsible for assessing any of the students within the sample, these students might have felt compelled to participate in the study or need to alter their responses to questions to 'please' the researcher. To address this power-related issue, the researcher was not present when potential participants were informed about and invited to participate in the study.

Participants were informed and reminded that they were free to leave the study at any stage. Their participation or choice to not participate was not tied to any assessment related to their academic standing or used to influence any matters relating to their university degree. Another full-time university staff member was designated as the primary point of contact for the students in the sample group as a process to manage this ethical constraint. This alternative staff member managed all ongoing academic issues for the students in the sample group, and the researcher only played an administrative role. The researcher is also an academic staff member teaching within the courses from which the sample group was selected. During their degree, the researcher was required to interact with participants. These interactions were primarily field-based, with the researcher acting in a mentoring capacity. Throughout the study, the researcher did not receive an appointment as a unit lecturer for the students enrolled in units, and the researcher was not required to provide a

formal assessment of any research participants that would affect their academic standing.

As Martin (2002) implies, all research attempts to reduce or document the researcher's influence on the research data. Naturalistic inquiry acknowledges that this influence can never be eliminated, and must be acknowledged and used to strengthen the research. As the researcher interacted with the study participants throughout their degree, this interaction is noted within the study and influenced the interpretation of the data and discussion.

Data Collection - Phase 1 - Description and Contextualisation of Participants

This section describes the survey used to collect descriptive data on the study participants. Examination of the participants' demographic characteristics assisted this researcher in understanding the background of the students engaging in outdoor leadership programs. Contextualising the demographic data also assisted this researcher in completing the inductive and deductive processes required to develop the initial semi-structured interview guide. Reinforcing this initial survey methodology, Yu et al. (2021) utilised a similar survey tool to capture participants' demographic descriptors in investigating undergraduates' preparedness for practice and their association with professional identity and perception of educational environments.

Data Collection - Phases 2, 3, 4 - Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method to collect the qualitative data for this study. They were also chosen because they provided a platform for the researcher to 'tap into the experience' using the participants' voices and their typical language. Guba and Lincoln (1988) and Dawson (2002) indicated that

semi-structured interviewing is common in qualitative social research. This interviewing style is often used when the researcher knows enough about the phenomenon being studied to develop the questions prior to the interview (Richards and Morse, 2007). As Barbour (2008) noted, a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to guide without dictating the questioning throughout the interview. It also allows for perspectives that are important to the participant to come forward and creates the latitude and the freedom for the participant to feel that they can direct parts of the interview to ensure that their opinions are voiced (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Guest et al. (2013) proposed that this interview technique allows for the development of trust and rapport between the interviewer and the participants. Strong trust and rapport were essential for this study because of the extended period (3 years) over which the researcher interacted with the participants.

Semi-structured interviewing, within a longitudinal study, provides a platform for the researcher to ask the study participants the same questions at different times, thereby gathering data that can be used to compare and contrast individual responses to the same question over time. This study explores the personal change in the participants throughout the study duration. The longitudinal nature of this study created the opportunity to explore this personal change by asking the same questions across all three semi-structured interviews. The researcher prepared and logically ordered open-ended questions before the semi-structured interviews to ensure that they covered the concepts and content required and provided sufficient and necessary data to respond to the research aims.

Interview Schedule

This data collection phase focussed on tracking the development of students' perceptions about their professional identity. A series of interviews were conducted with the participants to collect this data. The interviews were conducted at two points during the students' course and one point soon after course completion (for some students depending on course choice). These interview times were selected because they marked points within the progress of the course when students had completed significant units that contributed to their theoretical, philosophical, and functional knowledge and understanding of the outdoor industry. All interviews were conducted in a quiet office location in private, away from other students, and recorded as an audio file. Interviews were approximately 25 - 40 minutes, with the shortest being 21 minutes and the longest 53 minutes. The data collected at each stage was analysed, which allowed key themes that emerged early in the study to be further explored during later interviews.

Table 4.

Interview Schedule and Timing

Tool	Focus
Mid-First Year – 2013	To explore students' perceptions about the role of outdoor leaders (e.g., attributes, roles, expectations) and gain an understanding of each student's personal outdoor experiences before starting their studies.
First Half of the Second Year, 2014	Current perceptions of the development of outdoor leadership skills and knowledge related to professional identity development. Explore how the understanding of the outdoor profession has changed over the year. General discussion and identification of course experiences over the past year.

Table 4. Continued

Tool	Focus
Start of year 4/post-graduation – November 2015	Discussion of their current perceptions surrounding outdoor leaders and personal development as outdoor leaders. Exploration of course experiences and development of outdoor skills and knowledge? Exploration of what qualities students think they have as an outdoor leader and where they see themselves in the future.

Preparing the Interview Guide

In a semi-structured interview, the researcher must get past superficial answers (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This exploration requires the interviewer to utilise various tools and techniques to extract the depth of response required from the participants. Lichtman (2010) highlighted how the interview guide becomes integral in the semi-structured interview process and provides a broad framework for questioning.

Utilising this framework concept within this study, the development of the interview guide followed a process of identifying the 'substantive frame' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) or the range of initial topics that needed to be covered and explored. By prioritising these topics, relationships were identified, and topic areas were subsumed into others for flow and efficiency. The remaining topics or "lines of inquiry" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) were the areas needing to be covered and explored in the interview. Table 5. provides an example of this process to create the interview guide for interview 1.

Table 5.

Substantive Frame Topics for Interview Questions

Number	Topic
1	Broad outdoor questions
2	What have you done in the past?
3	What did you enjoy?
4	Course choice
5	Professional identity
6	Professional practice
7	General identity questions
8	Who are they now?
9	Who do they want to become?
10	What do they know/understand about the profession?
11	How do they explain what they do/want to become?
12	Social perceptions
13	Family
14	Friends
15	What learning experiences do they value?
16	General question asking for comments?

Developing the first round of interview questions used the listed substantive framework (Table 5.), which was then explored by the investigators and refined around the research question concepts. The resulting lines of inquiry were formulated and used to generate the final interview guide for round 1 (Appendix E). A similar process was used to formulate the interview guide for rounds 2 (Appendix F) and 3 (Appendix

G). For these interviews, the iterative process of reviewing the data from the previous round factored into the development of the substantive frame and the following lines of inquiry (Table 6.) through inductive and deductive data analysis, as explained in more detail later in this chapter.

Table 6.

Lines of Inquiry Questions

Number	Line of Inquiry
1	What are your outdoor experiences, and why did you enrol in the course?
2	What do you think about different professions and what it means to be a professional?
3	What are your thoughts on outdoor leaders and your course?

After Hays and Singh (2012), a matrix was developed with six different question categories to ensure a breadth of question styles were used in the interview guides. These categories were 1. Background or Demographic, 2. Behaviour or Experience, 3. Opinion or Value, 4. Knowledge, 5. Feeling, and 6. Probing (Table 7.). For the specific questions used in interview guide 1, please see Appendix E. This process of question development ensured that the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews allowed for a breadth of responses from the participants, enabled them to express their thoughts across a broad conceptual framework, and provided a foundation from which to draw thick descriptions and data (Houghton et al., 2013) for analysis.

Table 7.

Matrix to ensure a breadth of question types (applied to Int 1)

Question Number	Background or Demographic	Behaviour or Experience	Opinion or Value	Knowledge	Feeling	Probing
1	X	X				
2					X	
2a			X			
3			X			
4	X					
4a		X				
4b			X			
5	X		X			
6			X			
7				X		
8				X		
9			X			
10			X			
11a + b			X			
12			X	X		
13			X	X		X
14			X	X		
15		X	X	X		
16		X	X	X		
17		X	X	X		
18				X		
19			X		X	
20			X			
21			X			
22						X

The interview guide used primarily open-ended questions (Barbour, 2008), providing the flexibility to allow other areas/concepts and experiences to emerge throughout the interview. This process was implemented with the understanding that open-ended questions would ensure the participants provided responses that encouraged further exploration. Unplanned or probing questions can be asked to explore specific concepts arising during the interview process. Guest et al. (2013) defined probing questions as unscripted inductive questions the interviewer asks in response to an answer to another question. These probing questions allow the researcher to add depth to the data collected and shed light on emerging concepts for future interview rounds.

For this study, several topics remained constant through the interview cycles, enabling the longitudinal tracking of specific conceptual and knowledge changes within individual cases. These topics included:

- the role of family and friends in supporting the students' studies;

- the role of outdoor leaders; and

- the concept of professionalism.

As supported by Barbour (2008), this approach suggested that using similar questions in consecutive interview guides makes sense to facilitate comparison between transcripts.

The Trustworthiness of Interview Data Collection

The qualitative data collected during the three separate interviews provided rich descriptions of a range of complex phenomena. These descriptions provided an understanding of, and gave meaning to, the range of participant experiences. Five specific strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The use of

prolonged engagement, researcher experience and qualification, purposive sampling, iterative questioning, and member checking (Connelly, 2016) supported the credibility and transferability of the data and research outcomes. Several factors (e.g., evidence-based, discipline appropriateness) needed consideration before collecting the qualitative data to ensure that the data collection and analysis used were considered plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible (Burke, 1997).

The data collection process was immersive, with the researcher involved in the entire longitudinal process and responsible for the data's design, collection, and analysis. Prolonged engagement of this nature supports the credibility (Shenton, 2004) of the data and, therefore, the trustworthiness of the research outcomes. This immersion required the researcher to be sensitive and understand the context throughout the process. This understanding of context was evident through communicating to study participants that the researcher would be involved with their educational development throughout their study and informing them that their participation in the research project would not affect their academic performance. This communication allowed the participants to feel comfortable expressing their true feelings in question responses without fear of negative consequences on their academic performance.

Furthermore, the researcher was highly aware of the holistic context of each student's educational journey through their degree due to the researcher's extensive experience in this discipline area. This experience added to the researcher's credibility within the student cohort, supported the trustworthiness of the data and allowed the researcher to be very sensitive to the context in facilitating communication during interviews (Shenton, 2004). A conversational facilitation style facilitated a relaxed environment where participants could respond to questions. This approach is

consistent with the more general expectation of Hays and Singh (2012) that an interview should not seem like an interview. Keeping a relaxed environment is essential to facilitate the flow of conversation. The researcher also showed commitment and rigour by conducting and rehearsing interviewing techniques before commencing the interviews and continuing this self-directed knowledge building as the interview rounds continued. The interview structure allowed for authentic two-way communication, which Rubin and Rubin (1995) have encouraged more generally as a successful way to establish a dynamic that allows the interviewer to feel comfortable that they can guide the interview. This interview structure also allows the interviewee to feel that they have the capacity to respond openly and honestly.

The use of the semi-structured interview guides and format helped ensure consistency in the data collection because all participants were asked the same questions. Probing questions were required to extricate context and depth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) from the participant's responses. However, these probing questions were all extensions of the planned and structured questions in the interview guides.

As the research was longitudinal, it allowed for member checking, which as Richards (2005) suggested, is a process of having participants validate their responses from previous rounds of data collection. Member checking further adds to the credibility of the data collection and overall trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). The researcher carried out this process of member checking when the same questions were asked in consecutive interviews, specifically checking for different responses. Posing questions to the participants, such as "when you said X, did you mean…?," ensured that the researcher had interpreted their responses correctly.

To minimise influences on participants' comments during the interviews, the researcher remained neutral and tried not to offer personal opinions; however, this was not always possible due to their immersion in the context. Maxwell (2013) espoused the concept that removing researcher bias in qualitative research can disconnect the researcher from the context and understanding of the presented phenomena. This concept supports the tenets of naturalistic research, which sees the researcher immersed in the research setting rather than separate from it (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

The purposeful selection of participants was another method used in the research design to ensure trustworthiness. Rather than random sampling, the researcher sought a valid representation (Richards & Morse, 2007) to ensure that the participants provided rich data, thereby allowing the researcher to address the research aims.

The participants' purposeful selection allowed the 'thick description' generation to become apparent through the data. This thick description further added credibility and transferability criteria to the trustworthiness of the research (Shenton, 2004). Jones et al. (2006) provided an understanding of this concept by stating that "thick description offers the reader entry into the culture as it exists" and "thick description comes from the immersion of the researcher in the cultural context and from collecting data from a variety of sources" (p.60). This study is congruent with Jones's statement because the researcher is an expert in the field, and they were immersed in the culture and context surrounding the research. The sample size throughout the study also demonstrates data collection from various sources, thereby adding to the thick description of the collected data.

As there were several sources of data collection over several data collection phases, an audit trail of the data, using the NVivo qualitative data software package (version 12), was implemented for data security. This software provides the capacity to store all interview transcripts, recordings, and data coding. All stored information is dated and time-stamped to ensure its proper use and to track it logically and temporally.

Method of Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data collection for this study occurred through a longitudinal process of semi-structured interviews. Figure 1 presents a macro-level model to conceptualise the data analysis.

Figure 1.

Macro-Level Data Analysis Conceptualisation
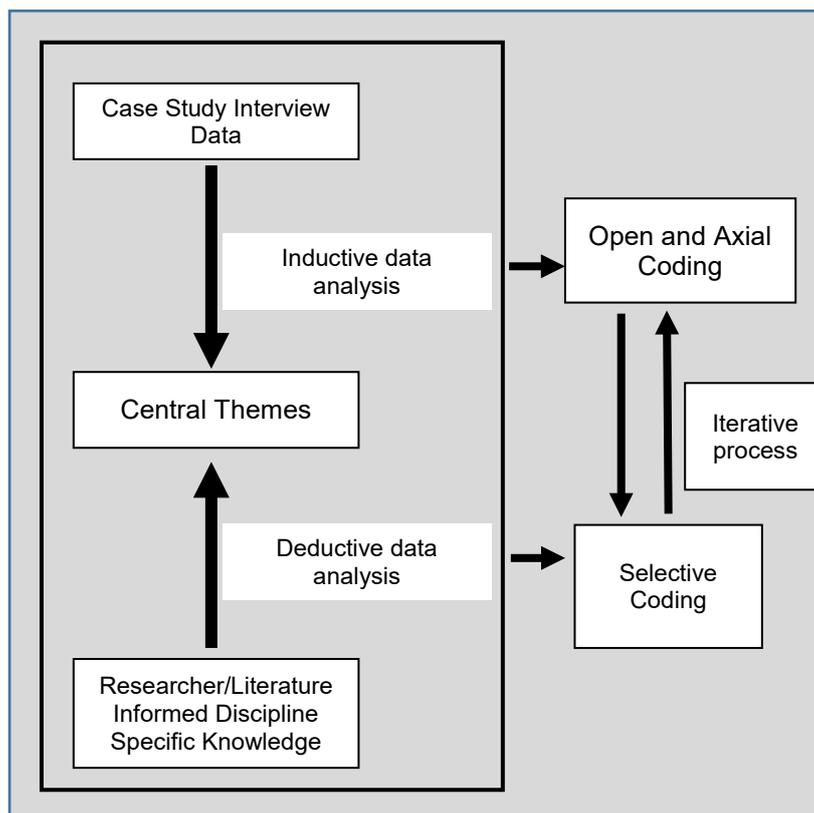
As indicated in Figure 1, the concept of establishing the central themes from the data was a combined process of inductive and deductive analysis. Combining the researcher's knowledge and the current literature served deductively to provide a foundational thematic coding structure that combined an iterative process with an inductive analysis of the interview data, allowing for creation of a set of open and axial codes. Richards and Morse (2007) suggested that this thematic coding process is simply a way to get from messy and unstructured data to ideas about what is going on in the data. They further indicated that thematic coding allows the researcher to simplify and focus on specific data characteristics. This analytical strategy allows these characteristics to represent clusters of concepts where similarities and differences can be categorised (Maxwell, 2013). Nowell et al. (2017) further supported the use of thematic analysis in qualitative research because it "provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (p. 2). For this study, the expression of similarities and differences in the data allows the codes to be applied and relationships identified between codes. Several data cycles were thematically analysed for this study to achieve the level and depth of analysis required to address the research aims appropriately.

Cycle 1 – Descriptive Demographic Data

Cycle 1 offered a set of descriptive demographic variables of the study participants that informed the researcher. This descriptive information contributed to the formulation of the initial interview guide. This data was collected through Survey Monkey, an online survey design, distribution, and capture application.

Cycle 2 – Iterative Process for Interview Development and Delivery

Cycle 2 provided the data analysis for phases 2, 3 and 4 of the study. The researcher conducted all interviews, and they were recorded digitally as audio files and then transcribed by a professional transcription service. All the study participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and protect their identities. For a list of the parent codes established in this cycle, see Appendix H.

Phase 2 – Interview 1.

The first set of interviews was transcribed and analysed for themes using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Coding was undertaken as part of the iterative process of this data analysis cycle to inform the future interview phases (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The researcher completed the coding for this phase by reading the interview transcripts and deductively utilising their knowledge to identify higher-order exploratory parent themes. This coding occurred through an open coding process (Grbich, 2007), whereby the data examination followed to identify concepts and categories for further analysis. The use of descriptive coding (Richards & Morse, 2007) and topic coding, both of which require minimal analytical interpretation (Richards, 2005), were utilised in this open coding process.

Completing the high-level parent coding highlighted the prominent themes from phase 2 for use in the development of the interview guide for phase 3. The parent codes were primarily descriptive (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) concepts that would be used in cycle 3 to provide structure for a more analytical review of the data.

Phase 3 – Interview 2.

Phase 3 used the prominent themes discovered through the Phase 2 open coding. These themes were incorporated into the interview guides to address the research aims. The interviews, once completed, were transcribed in the same way as Phase 2. However, the open coding process used for this round attempted to look more deeply for emergent categories in the data. This level of analysis is congruent with Barbour (2008), who suggested that the early stages of coding are more about indexing data into signposts that point to interesting pieces of data rather than representing a final argument about meaning. This coding process also used NVivo software. The concepts and themes identified as reoccurring in the data were used as signposts to provide conceptual structuring and direction for developing Phase 4 – Interview 3. This iterative data analysis was a core element of Cycle 2 of the data analysis.

Phase 4 – Interview 3.

Phase 4 - Interview 3 was the final interview and final data collection point in the longitudinal case study. This interview phase used a similar method to the previous two rounds. The prominent reoccurring themes were questioned and explored to conceptualise and construct the interview guide to ensure data was collected to address the research aims. The recorded audio files underwent transcription upon completion of the interviews, and then the researcher used the NVivo software to analyse the transcripts for themes and data. The open coding process was continued through this phase as Grbich (2007) identified that this process must transpire every time data is collected. The continued open coding allowed for further data analysis and ensured that several parent-level categories and themes were established within

the data coding. This establishment supported future structuring and organising to position the data for analysis of the relationships that were becoming evident in the data set.

Cycle 3 – Data Structuring and Organising

Cycle 3 focussed on further structuring and organising the data from the interviews. The narrative that can develop through semi-structured interviews can be inherently complex (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This complexity requires a structured and organised coding framework to help unpack the meaning and context of the interview data.

The parent codes established in Cycle 2 of the analysis became a basis for an axial coding process (Richards, 2005). Establishing these axial codes required aligning data passages from the interview transcripts with topics and parent nodes from Cycle 2. This process produced a data set of 'child' nodes (Appendix H). The axial coding (Grbich, 2007) began to refine the open coding process by collapsing the open codes into broader categories or (parent) codes to provide a more in-depth understanding of the data (Hays & Singh, 2012) and prepare the data for further selective coding.

Cycle 4 – Data Relationships

Cycle 4 was the final cycle in the data analysis process. This final cycle required reviewing the parent and child nodes to look for a deeper and richer understanding of the meaning contained in the data. Hays and Singh (2012) proposed using selective coding to refine axial codes further. This selective coding began identifying the data's

relationships, patterns, processes, and phenomena. The selective coding process was initiated using the data analysis tools from the NVivo software package.

Analytical tools such as Word Clouds (figures. 3 & 4) visualised the data to assist the analysis. Presenting data in this manner is supported by Heimerl et al. (2014), who indicate that word clouds are used in many contexts as a means to provide an overview by distilling text down to those words that appear with highest frequency, and can therefore serve as a starting point for a deeper analysis to occur. These tools helped the researcher provide a macro through to micro-level understanding and conceptualisation of the meaning in the data. This analytical interrogation of the data was crucial to help open up the data (Richards, 2005) to look for context, meaning, and a series of concepts within the data results. This reflexive way of looking for meaning within the data set provided the concepts used to address the primary research aims.

Summary of Methodological Design and Process

Figure 2 demonstrates a conceptual summary of the methodological design used during this study.

Figure 2.

Summary of Methodological Design and Process
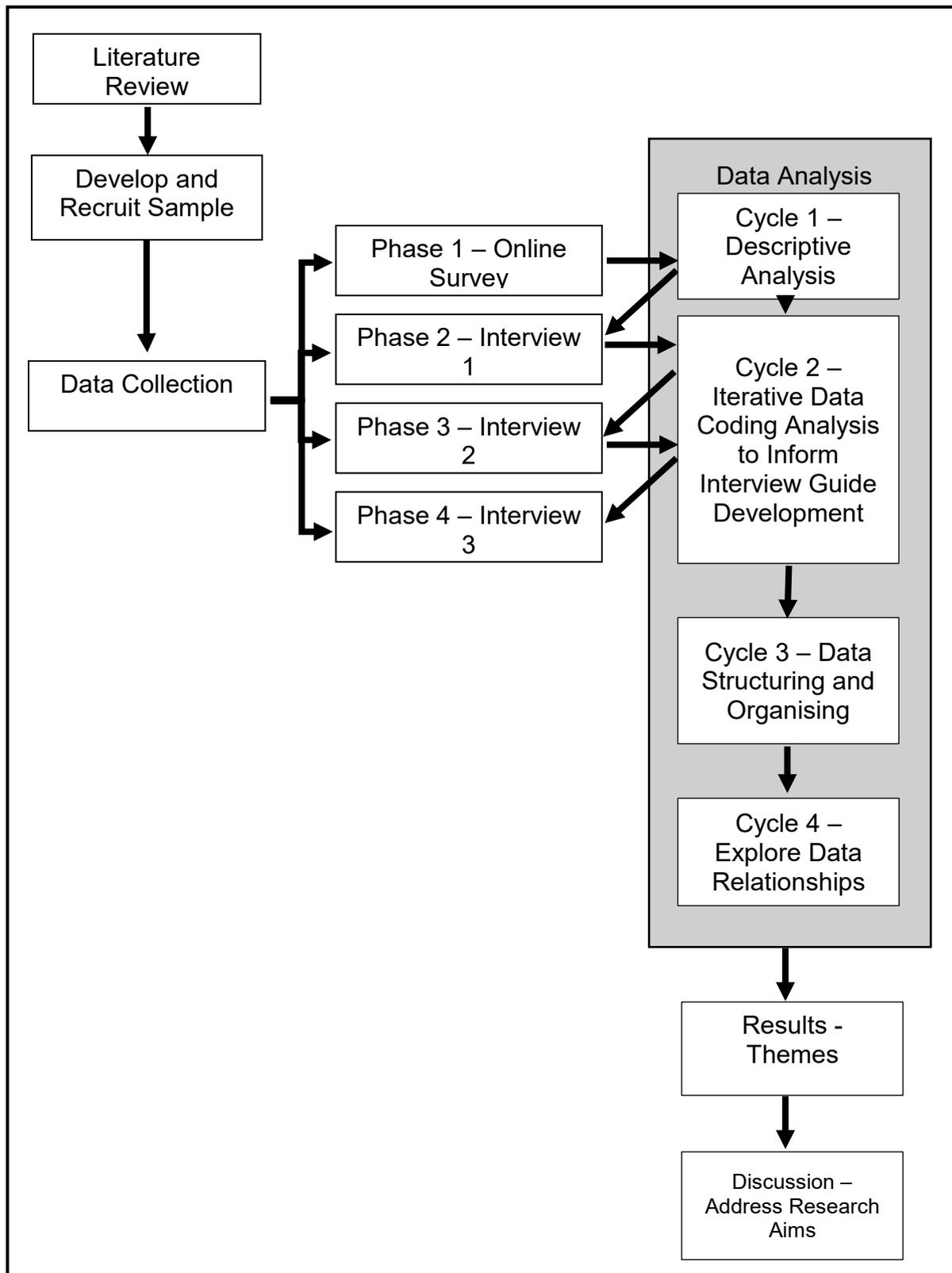
Chapter 4 - Results

Chapter Introduction

As noted in chapter 3, this study primarily focuses on qualitative data but uses descriptive quantitative data to formulate a baseline understanding of the study participants. First, in this chapter, the descriptive and contextualised quantitative results from phase 1 are presented. The second part of this chapter expands on the information previously presented and portrays the qualitative results of phases 2, 3 and 4 of the data collection. The results presented are an analysis of the participant interviews using the active voice of the participant to support the analysis.

Phase 1 - Description and Contextualisation of Participants

The following tables were generated from the baseline demographic survey and used to describe and contextualise the study participants. Presentation of each question occurs with the resultant data and an explanation of the contextualising impact this information had on the researcher's development of the initial interview guide.

Table 8.

Initial Survey Question 1.

Are you male or female?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Male	45.5%	10
Female	54.5%	12
	answered question	22
	skipped question	0

Contextualising: The sample was relatively balanced from a gender representation perspective. Although it is important not to 'gender' questions in the interviews, this study emphasised asking non-gendered questions to allow the students to answer the questions without any underlying bias or preconceived outcomes. As gender is an important identity construct, it was helpful to consider this information when developing the interview guides.

Table 9.

Initial Survey Question 2.

What is your age?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
18	9.1%	2
19	40.9%	9
20	4.5%	1
21	13.6%	3
22	4.5%	1
23	13.6%	3
24	4.5%	1
25	0.0%	0
26 - 30	9.1%	2
30 - 35	0.0%	0
35 - 40	0.0%	0
40+	0.0%	0
	answered question	22
	skipped question	0

Contextualising: The answers to this survey question gave the researcher an understanding of the age distribution in the sample. Understanding this distribution provided general guidance on potential time spent in employment and therefore developing an identity associated with employment.

Table 10.

Initial Survey Question 3.

In which country were you born?	In which country was your mother born?	In which country was your father born?
1 England	England	Northern Ireland
2 Australia	Australia	Australia
3 Australia	Australia	Australia
4 Australia	Australia	Australia
5 Australia	Holland	Australia
6 Australia	Australia	Australia
7 England	England	England
8 Australia	Australia	Australia
9 Australia	India	India
10 Australia	Australia	Britain
11 Australia	Australia	Australia
12 Australia	Australia	Australia
13 Australia	Australia	Germany
14 Australia	Australia	Australia
15 Australia	Australia	Australia
16 Australia	Australia	Australia
17 Australia	Australia	Australia
18 Australia	Australia	Australia
19 Australia	Australia	Australia
20 Australia	Australia	Australia
21 Australia	Australia	Malta
22 Australia	Australia	Australia
answered question	22	22	22
skipped question	0	0	0

Contextualising: Gaining an understanding of the students' and their parents' birthplaces provided an overview of the cultural diversity within the sample and, therefore, an indication of potential cultural identity contexts and influences on students' responses and perceptions.

Table 11.

Initial Survey Question 4.

Did you participate in Outdoor Education at secondary school?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	77.3%	17
No	22.7%	5
	answered question	22
	skipped question	0

Contextualising: The answers to this question provided insight into potential prior knowledge and perceptions that students in the sample group developed in pre-university outdoor education experiences.

Table 12.

Initial Survey Question 5.

If you participated in Outdoor Education at school, what were the year level of participation?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Year 7	4.5%	2
Year 8	9.5%	4
Year 9	19%	8
Year 10	27%	11
Year 11	19%	8
Year 12	21%	9
	answered question	18
	skipped question	4

Contextualising: This information provided context relating to the participation and the depth of experience and knowledge the students may have experienced during their schooling.

Table 13.

Initial Survey Question 6.

In which degree are you enrolled?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Bachelor of Sport and Recreation Management (Outdoor Recreation)	27.3%	6
Bachelor of Education (Outdoor Education)	54.5%	12
Bachelor of Applied Science (Physical Education)	13.6%	3
Bachelor of Education (Physical Education)	0.0%	0
Bachelor of Youth Work	4.5%	1
	answered question	22
	skipped question	0

Contextualising: The answers students provided to this question highlighted the breadth of course contexts requiring consideration by the researcher. The different courses and associated coursework provided the students with different understandings of, and experiences in, developing their professional identity.

Table 14.

Initial Survey Question 7.

Do you participate in any outdoor activities with your parents?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	57.9%	11
No	42.1%	8
	answered question	19
	skipped question	3

Contextualising: Gathering information on the experiences the students were exposed to outside of university with their parents would illuminate some of the potential foundational perceptions and external influences on their identity development. This information informed the design of the initial interview guides surrounding questions relating to external forces, familial perceptions, and other identity development concepts.

Table 15.

Initial Survey Question 8.

Do you participate in any outdoor activities with your friends?

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Yes	94.7%	18
No	5.3%	1
	answered question	19
	skipped question	3

Contextualising: Similar to Interview Question 7., gathering information on the experiences the students were exposed to beyond the university, specifically involving their friends, illuminated potential external influences and social perceptions related to their identity development. This information informed the design of initial semi-structured interview questions relating to external forces, societal perceptions, and other identity development concepts.

Table 16.

Initial Survey Question 9. – Data Response Examples

What are 4 key pieces of information you currently know about working in the outdoor industry?

Student	1	2	3	4
5	There are hundreds of different jobs and opportunities all over the world.	You need to regularly update your qualifications.	It can be a demanding lifestyle.	You need to be able to adapt to different situations.
6	It's a lifestyle not a job.	It requires a lot of organisation.	Experience is important.	Open-mindedness helps
13	Hard industry to work in, not many jobs.	First aid is essential.	Knowing the land.	Knowing how to navigate.

Table 16. Continued

Student	1	2	3	4
14	Many different activities to be involved with.	Lots of fun. Rewarding.	It can take you to different places.	Different levels e.g. Teaching/instruction, management, organisation, OH&S.
16	There are many dangers involved with guiding/ teaching people in the outdoors.	Good group morale is vital for activities to run smoothly.	As the leader, you have a duty of care.	It is important that everyone feels safe and is having fun.

Note. See Appendix C for a complete data set

Contextualising: The response to this question provided information on the students' initial understanding of the outdoor industry. The responses highlighted students' preconceptions and understanding of the industry at course commencement. The study's longitudinal design would provide a framework to follow the development of the students' knowledge and understanding of the industry.

Table 17.

Initial Survey Question 10. – Data Response Examples

What do you think it means to be a professional?

Student	Response
1	A professional is someone who has lots of experience in the outdoors and they must have a variety of skills needed to survive in the outdoors and they must be able to provide a safe shelter for people with less experience in the outdoors.
2	Have accredited knowledge and experience. Be good at what you do and follow rules and regulations. Have professional relationships with your employees and customers.

Table 17. Continued

Student	Response
7	To be in a job that is paid well and can take you everywhere around the world.
15	I think it means to educate children in a manner that they can both experience new things and learn and get a message across that children should be outdoors more.

Note. See Appendix D for a complete data set

Contextualising: Answers provided by students in this question assisted the researcher in formulating initial conceptualisations surrounding the presentation of professional identity as a concept to study participants through the interviews. These responses helped inform the design of the semi-structured interviews.

Resultant Themes (cycles 3 and 4)

Data from the participant interviews were first analysed to look for broad conceptual themes related to the interview questions the participants answered. This high-level analysis generated 894 unique verbatim codes to commence the data organisation.

The second round of analysis looked for key relationships within the initial 894 verbatim codes, resulting in 151 conceptual codes. The third round of analysis resulted in 20 parent codes with 105 child nodes (Appendix H). The final round of analysis generated five main themes in the data (see Table 18). For these five themes, the same parent or child nodes could be present in multiple themes due to the applicable relevance of the participants' comments.

Table 18.

Five Main Qualitative Themes

Theme	Concept	Overview
1.	Qualifications versus Experience	This theme is associated with the participants' responses to the interplay that they perceive exists between the need for qualifications and experience to gain professional credibility and, therefore, employment.
2.	The Links between Outdoor Leadership Experiences and Professional Identity	This theme uses the participants' responses to show their understanding of their knowledge of Outdoor Leadership and general professionalism and how they see these two concepts link together.
3.	Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors	This theme uncovers what the participants saw as enablers or inhibitors of their professional identity development through the curriculum they were provided with during their course (e.g., field classes versus classroom lectures).
4.	Family, Friends, General Social Perceptions, and their Impacts	This theme identifies the breadth of family and friends' positive and negative links to the participants' professional identity development. It also relates to the range of social perceptions the participants identified that impacted their professional identity development, and how they internalised and made sense of those perceptions.
5.	Effects of Role Modelling	This theme relates to the role modelling participants observed and identified as an essential part of their professional identity development.

The resultant data structure in this chapter is established through the use of "parent" and "child" nodes (NVivo, n.d.) that emerged through the thematic analysis of the interview data. This thematic node structure guided the explanation of the results in this chapter as the child nodes were examined to investigate the interrelationship between the five main themes.

Theme Frequency

The themes recognised in this chapter resulted from the methodological process identified in Figure 2. To provide context surrounding the scope of the individual references used in acknowledging the themes, see Table 19.

Table 19.

Individual Reference Totals - Thematic Data Analysis

Theme	Number of references used from interview transcripts
Theme 1: Qualifications Versus Experience for Professional Credibility	41
Theme 2 – Link Between Outdoor Leadership Experience and Professional Identity	985
Theme 3 – Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors	349
Theme 4 – Family, friends, general social perceptions, and their impacts	226
Theme 5 – Effects of Peer relationships and role modelling	46

Theme 1 - Qualifications Versus Experience for Professional Credibility

The researcher expected that this theme would emerge from the data. Within Australia's Outdoor Industry, there has long been a challenge between qualification versus experience for professional credibility and employability, evidenced in the following resultant data sections. Several of the interview questions allowed the participants to explore concepts of 'what is a professional' and 'what makes someone a professional'. The idea of the validity of a qualification versing the accumulation of knowledge and experience over time was a perspective that the participants would often reiterate.

The participants' notion of qualifications covered the breadth of awards from degree-based university programs to TAFE-based competencies and specific industry-based certificates or awards. The interview commentary surrounding experience from all participants demonstrated the assumption that the longer an individual does something, the more experience and/or confidence they possess to teach/instruct/facilitate relevant skills and knowledge for others.

The repeated theme regarding experience relating to competence ranged through several perspectives for the study participants. A concept within this theme referred to the participants feeling that completing a qualification may mean they can display competence. However, more experience was still required to feel as though they were confident to use their competence in professional work. Jack indicated, "I would walk out with a qualification and still not feel completely confident, so I guess it comes back to being more experienced." Aaron stated, "(I) managed to obtain all these qualifications, but I need to build on that from time and experience." Although they had completed their university degrees, Jack and Aaron agreed that they still felt their confidence levels were insufficient to act with total professional capacity because of

their lack of experience. Their recorded comments link to the curriculum-related concept of experience developed through field practicum time within the degree. The comments also highlight whether students receive enough field practicum time by graduation to ensure they are confident to act professionally. Aaron commented further:

> time and experience often have more impact than a formal qualification. Because I mean, you look at someone like Mark (staff); he's had heaps of experience and probably doesn't have many qualifications, and yet, I'd trust him over many, many people to go and, you know, take me down a river, for example. So, you know, I think that, yeah, the qualification is probably a necessity, um, for our society and for, like, legal stuff and all that sort of thing.

Aaron indicated that his exposure to role models (staff) that have considerable experience but lack formal qualifications showed him that formal qualifications might be more of a regulatory or industry-imposed construct rather than a mechanism to provide confidence in the skills of the outdoor leader.

The concept of being a professional outdoor leader and the experience required to be considered 'professional' was not well evidenced or defined as a concrete concept that was understood by the participants within the resultant data. Their comments varied based on the individual participant and how they perceived the context of being a professional. Evidence of this variance is noted in the following excerpt from Beth, where she stated, "Yeah, it is much more about the experience rather than the piece of paper." Exemplification of this thematic idea occurs in the following statement from Ange:

So maybe a professional isn't an expert because I think an expert is someone that just has done it all. I don't think at the end of four years I would have finished learning, I don't think that experts have finished learning, but I think that there's still a big difference between finishing a four-year Uni degree and being an expert in your field because I think you still have to experience a lot and learn a lot before you can really have expertise in an area.

In her quote, Ange implies that even though a qualified person can be considered a professional, they still may not be an expert as they lack the experience to a level that would see them as an expert. The validity of 'qualifications' as a measure of a professional's competence was also a recurring perspective in this theme. The idea of receiving a qualification but then still needing to acquire further experience after completing the qualification to gain appropriate levels of industry and professional recognition was questioned by Aaron in this statement:

Qualification(s), you can say you can develop all the qualifications in the world, but you've got to have the experience. So, kind of where I'm getting at now, I feel like I've developed all these qualifications, I've managed to obtain all these qualifications, but I need to build on that from, well, time and experience.

This statement from Aaron was made at the midpoint of the study when he was halfway through his degree. Even at this time, this participant's account reflected that the 'experiences' he received from his university course would not be enough to feel like he could operate as a professional upon graduation.

As is evident in the presented data, the theme of qualifications versus experience for professional credibility was something that all participants commented

on from their perspectives and experiences. The need for the study participants to feel 'confident' with their experience level upon graduation for a measure of professional credibility was also prominent. It will receive further consideration in the discussion section of the following chapter.

Theme 2 – Links Between Outdoor Leadership Experience and Professional Identity

When aggregating the qualitative data, this theme was the most prominent, with 985 individual participant references represented. This prominent set of thematic references suggested that the participants' demonstrated a limited connection with the concept of identity in the early stages of their studies. A variety of student commentaries about outdoor leadership experience and professional identity also contributed to the prominence of the data within this theme.

To ensure that all pertinent data relating to the theme is presented appropriately, this section will be further broken down into subsections, ensuring an appropriate representation of the breadth of the results. This theme ranged from thematic data generated outlining specific definitions (outdoor education, professional, outdoor leader) to interpersonal and intrapersonal descriptions regarding concepts of identity, professionalism, and the qualities and changing perceptions of an outdoor leader.

Definitions and Descriptions

Attempts by participants to define what they do in their course and how they explain this to others were demonstrated in responses regarding how they make sense of their professional identity. The participants expressed a series of ideas in the data

arising from this concept. While most responses for this theme provided an articulate insight into professional identity, a few participants were less able to provide an overview of their connection to professional identity.

When trying to define what they did in their course, some of the participants focussed on the concept of teaching others about the environment, with James indicating that "I say that we are developing skills to teach other people to enjoy and use the environment." This concept found support from Beth, who added, "teaching students to appreciate the environment around them and how to become a part of it as well. So, being an active member of what we do and then, just teaching them to appreciate it and have fun." Jack further specified, "that's not just about learning all about adventure activities but also about the environment and nature and stuff like that." In these responses, the students' natural environment was a central focus. This pattern was reasonably consistent, given that the use of the outdoors is a core concept within outdoor leadership.

However, even with this central concept of environment regularly appearing in the data, many students expressed challenges with the idea of defining what it was they were studying. As the students' knowledge about their profession and industry broadened throughout the course, it seemed that some students became more confused and could not fully capture their profession's scope in a simple, concise definition. Paula's comment in the second interview signified numerous participants' challenges: "It's education; I don't know, I can't explain it, I don't even know how anymore".

The adventure-based curriculum activities the study participants completed during their studies was also a concept that appeared in the data when the study participants were trying to explain what they did within their course. Twelve

participants reflected on the importance of adventure-based activities in their curriculum. This importance was exemplified when John revealed that he often described his course participation by telling people, "we do a lot of camps a lot of different subjects so…, yeah from hiking and bushwalking to rafting and mountain biking and all of that." Carl further supported this concept by mentioning, "I could say, oh I'm doing Outdoor Ed, I'm going on a few camps." Furthermore, Jim added, "the knowledge that you need to have to do that job, whether it's rock climbing or paddling, so that involves safety, and you need first aid." These comments indicated that when explaining their course and what they did, many students would rely on the more concrete activity-based concepts surrounding outdoor recreation activities. Concrete elements were potentially more understandable to others and offered a safer way for students to explain their course. This approach helped them avoid engaging with the more theoretical or conceptual ideas they were learning. Sticking to the more concrete ideas meant the students also did not have to expose themselves to potential further questioning from others about concepts that the student or the questioner may not fully understand. For the students, providing an incomplete or decontextualised response may also serve to devalue or de-legitimise their course and career choices, thereby negatively impacting their professional identity.

To provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of their understanding on their concept of professional identity, the study participants attempted to define their perspective of a professional. This question was asked in interviews 1 and 2 to track and evaluate any progression in the participant's responses. In interview 1, this question elicited diverse responses from the participants that demonstrated various meanings and concepts. These comments were related to the acquisition of specific skills, with Beth indicating that "You have to be quite skilled to be a professional" and

Paula explaining that her definition of a professional included "being skilled in the areas in which they deliver".

While the concept of skills was prominent in the responses, eight different participants used the concept of gaining academic qualifications to define a professional. For example, Jim stated that "I don't know like maybe if you do study, like higher education there's more likelihood you're going to be a professional because in your job in your field because you have that education like requirements for that job." While Renee felt that "you're still doing a lot of education to be a nurse and teacher… I would think this is professional as well because you are doing the education".

In contrast to these tangible concepts of skill and qualification, five other participants used intangible and nebulous concepts to define a professional. For example, Beth proposed that "a profession or career is something you feel connected to and you're happy doing it even if you don't get paid for it" and observed that "a professional in a field would hopefully have a love for that profession, as well as, really enjoy what they're doing, have a passion." Also, Carl explained that "you need to conduct yourself in a certain way to be considered a professional".

Renee further embraced diverse concepts by maintaining that "when a teacher has been teaching for fifteen years compared to a teacher that has, you know, just graduated. Obviously, the fifteen-year teacher is more professional. But I'd still consider them both professional at what they do." This statement expresses a tension between the concepts of skill, qualification, and time spent engaged in the profession. Rosa supported the time-engaged perspective of this tension by defining a professional as "If you've been in it for years kind of thing and it's just like a second nature kind of thing." The above statements were very generic and provided little depth

of understanding when considering concepts defining a professional. These statements were generated in interview 1 at the start of the student's time studying for their degree. The generic quality of the responses continued in interview 2 (mid-degree) when asked the same question. While many of the interview 2 responses contained similar elements to those in interview 1, ten of the participants began to focus their responses on behaviour and conduct and the interplay between experience and qualification in the definition of a professional. During interview 2, Renee said:

> Mark has a lot of experience in what he does, which helps him again be at a higher level than most people, so he's experienced. Ah, there you go, so not just education but also experience in what you do, can help you be a professional. I guess also the way, like we are just talking about image and how you portray yourself. I mean you can have all these experiences and all this knowledge but not act professionally.

Shaz also supported the concept of behaviour and conduct: "I suppose being a role model, being a good example or something major, is what I think is a professional." However, Beth noted that, in her mind, a professional did "not need to have paper qualifications," indicating that for her, there are alternative pathways to becoming a professional rather than through formal education, which further supports Renee's previous comment about Mark.

The participants showed no common understanding of how to define a professional. This lack of consensus existed elsewhere in the data, with all participants struggling to define 'what is an outdoor leader or professional and what they do' concisely and consistently. Amanda evidenced this lack of consensus and clarity in her replies: "I don't explain it very well" in interview 1, and "I'm not sure" when asked the same question in interview 2. Amanda also indicated that the concept's scope was

challenging to convey to others by revealing that "it's kind of hard to explain because it is so broad." Aaron expressed frustration in his response to this question by indicating that:

> it can be frustrating at times, but, um, I suppose it depends on who you're talking to. If you're talking to someone who understands what a professional is and has this-- I suppose it's what their idea of a professional is, someone who is a teacher, or even if it is a different teaching field, or has a certain amount of education, I suppose you can draw comparisons and be able to have a constructive conversation with them about exactly what's happening.

In his answer, Aaron revealed that his responses would differ depending on the person to whom he was trying to explain the concept. On the other hand, Rosa expressed her frustration that it was complicated to define an outdoor leader or professional: "I could explain it till I'm blue in the face, and they still wouldn't get it. So now I'm just like, 'Yeah, I go on camp,' and that's it." This varying level and style of responses highlight the challenge many participants experienced when they were trying to explain the concept of an outdoor professional, and their explanation was not understood. In interview 1, Jack also noted this challenge:

> I think people just don't understand, really, and probably wouldn't see it
> as a profession. I think that just comes down to because they don't know
> what actually goes on. And you can tell that when you explain it to
> someone. They go, 'Oh, what's outdoor ed?'

Jack's response in interview 2 to the same question expressed the same frustration as interview 1. His response also demonstrated the devaluing many participants experienced when defining what an outdoor leader or professional is or does. Jack

explained that "it sort of just goes straight over the top of their head; they just think, Oh, PE, but you camp; you ride a bike and camp at night. Like, you're just on a holiday all the time." In interview 3, Jack's responses reinforced progress in his thinking on the definition of an outdoor professional:

> Well, I guess at the start, I'd be like, 'Yeah, I do; I have lots of fun,' and I
> didn't really want to explain to them; like, I guess if that's what they think,
> it's what they think. Um, but now, even changing what I say-- I don't say
> I'm going on a camp anymore. I say I'm going on a field lab. It just sounds
> more professional.

The data presented in this section shows that the participants provided a wide range of definitions for the concepts of 'professional' and 'outdoor leader'. The definitions changed over time for some participants, showing a breadth of understanding of the ideas and terms. To further investigate the participant's understanding of these concepts and how they are related to their professional identity development, the following section explores the responses of these participants as they began to relate these concepts to themselves.

Descriptions

Analysis of the data associated with the Outdoor Leadership experience and professional identity revealed how the participants began to relate to the definition-based concepts more personally over time. In the earlier interviews, participants responded to questions that addressed professional perspectives that were external to themselves (e.g., How do you explain what an outdoor professional is?). The responses provided data on how participants understood and defined these perspectives. The participants were asked to identify across all three interviews what

they thought the main role of an outdoor leader was, what the qualities of an outdoor leader are, and to list five words to describe a professional. They were also asked whether they described themselves as an outdoor leader or professional, and how they described their leadership styles and characteristics.

When asked about the main role of an outdoor leader in interview 1, the central concept appearing in the data was safety. This concept was apparent in several participant responses. Amanda identified "Peoples Safety" in her answer, and Aaron reported, "First of all, it is to get everyone home safe." Dave added, "keep them safe from any hazards," and Shaz suggested "First aid, knowledge and safety."

The next most frequently mentioned idea in framing the role of the professional in outdoor leadership was providing and facilitating experiences. James referred to "working out logistics and all that sort of stuff, all the stuff behind the scenes and then the stuff like actually leading the groups through the activities and through the expeditions. Watching them…, well facilitating the activities." James' response was echoed by John:

> A lot of responsibilities, I think, I thought they would have to be qualified
> to handle each situation so in regards to safety and first aid and those
> kinds of things and yeah be able to lead a group and control a group, I
> guess that's probably part of it as well.

Given that interview 1 was conducted during the first few months of participants beginning their course, James' and John's statements show prior knowledge and thought. However, this level of thinking was not displayed by all participants. For example, Jim identified the main role of an outdoor leader as "Just to help kids have a good time."

The data arising from interview 2 (at the mid-point in the students' course

delivery) continued the interview 1 themes. Safety still featured prominently when participants answered the repeated question: what is the main role of an outdoor leader? However, a larger number of participants demonstrated a higher level of thought in their responses, evident in the concepts they articulated and the vocabulary they used. For example, Ange answered:

> I think their job is to educate people and to provide them an environment which they feel secure in, to try things that they haven't tried before, but it is…, yeah, feel secure enough to take risks however big or small that is, it doesn't matter as long as it's something new for that person I think. So yeah that's what I'll say, safety, education, creating a secure environment.

Ange's statement linked the concepts of safety, risk, security, and education. While Amanda used specific industry-related nomenclature within her response, again referencing safety, and also using the term 'duty of care'. Amanda explained that "their main role would be, like their duty of care towards those people and then looking after them, their safety and making sure there is safety between them and having fun".

Both Carl and John used the concept of facilitation in their interview 2 responses. Carl said that "the way I see it, the main job is to facilitate the participant to have an enjoyable but safe and challenging experience that will benefit them personally in the end." John added, "I think main job of an outdoor leader is to facilitate the course, the camp, whatever it may be, to make sure that they achieve desired outcomes." Both of these responses continued the theme of facilitation and mentioned the role of achieving program outcomes. Compared to their responses in Interview 1, the participants' answers in Interview 2 showed some progress toward a more sophisticated understanding of the role of the outdoor leader.

The participants were asked the same question regarding what is the main role of an outdoor leader, in interview 3 at the end of their course delivery. Their responses continued the predominant theme from the previous two interviews about providing safe experiences. James used the safety concept again but added some more specific conceptual ideas to his answer:

> To provide a safe environment for kids. Oh, there's so many things. well, these days I just explain to them that my job is safety-- or to safely take all these kids on all these incredible activities out in the outdoors and, um, get them to see how good it is to be away from modern society, and how sheltered we are in our, I guess, general day lives. Yeah, give them a bit of excitement, a bit of fun.

Ange started with safety in her answer, "The most important thing, I think, is keeping people safe, number one", as part of a more detailed and conceptually supported response:

> and then I think it's about facilitating the outcomes that are required for the specific trip. So, you know, if it's a year seven camp, facilitating an outcome of people getting to know each other and building a community because they don't know each other and they're, you know, all new and all that sort of thing. Um, and then I think the-- giving them an experience that's really positive. So they're probably the top three: safety, facilitating the learning outcome, and then making sure it's fun.

The interview 3 responses showed progression and development of knowledge related to the roles of an outdoor leader. Beth's response listed several concepts covered in many of the units she studied during her course:

to spread awareness and understanding of our natural environment and

to foster the relationships that can be built, both with others and with

yourself, in that environment. Um, yeah, so, um, spreading awareness

of the outdoors and the environment, so that people understand, um, the

different ways that they can interact with it, and what it-- um, why it's so

important for us to help protect it and, um, just to go out and enjoy it and

how healthy it is for us to be out there. And then the specifics to, like, a

group, the benefits of relationships and, personal development and the

development of social skills and all that sort of thing as well.

These specific concepts of 'environment', 'community', 'human/nature relationships' were not present in the earlier interviews when participants were asked the same question. The development of knowledge and understanding of the role of the outdoor leader was evident in the participants' responses across the three interview rounds.

Several quotes from participants encapsulated the development of their understanding of the roles of the outdoor leader. These quotes explicitly identified that the participants' knowledge had increased and deepened throughout their study. In interview 3, Beth responded:

I think it's just broadened, um, in the sense that originally it was, like, the

leaders are-- like, they're important in a lot of different ways, um, to

develop skills and knowledge and that sort of thing. But now it expands

even further into-- it's not just important to be a leader to that one group;

you need to be a leader to the community at large as well.

This quote also identified the role of the outdoor leader extending out of the workplace and crossing into other areas of personal life with a more holistic focus. Ange indicated that her understanding of the outdoor leader role had deepened over her study to a

position that required considerable thought to fulfil the function:

> I think it's gotten a lot deeper, yeah. So, I think initially it was a bit more
> surface-value, like, you just go and go walking, and that's really fun, and
> it just all happens for you, and you just make sure everyone's doing the
> right thing, and you're the one with the skills. Whereas now I think it's a
> bit more-- takes a lot more than that. You can't just really ride along with
> the kids and expect it all to happen, you know what I mean?

The concept of fun appeared in Ange's response within the context of needing to provide a fun experience, but her response identified that there is so much more to the role than just providing a fun experience. Fun was a recurring theme through many of the participant's responses and will receive further discussion in the Theme 4 section. It is noted, however, that James used the concept of fun in his response by identifying that he had developed an understanding of the role that moved past the simple concept of 'fun' and into more profound concepts:

> I guess when I first started, it sort of was like, 'We go out on all these
> trips and have fun and do all this sort of stuff,' but now I guess it's, it's a
> lot more on the safety and about the kids and about achieving all these
> goals and outcomes that we want to put on the kids and that the teachers
> and staff want us to put on the kids. Um, and now, yeah, it's that soft skill
> sort of stuff, rather than just, 'Take these kids out and have fun.' It's much
> more layered now.

The above responses have encapsulated the participants' perspectives concerning the main role of an outdoor leader. The participants were also asked in interviews 1 and 2 to identify the characteristics of an outdoor leader. This line of questioning asked the participants to be specific in their responses to identify these

characteristics. The word clouds (Figures 3 and 4) display the most frequent words appearing in the student response data.

Figure 3.

Interview 1 – Qualities of an Outdoor Leader

Figure 4.

Interview 2 – Qualities of an Outdoor Leader

The words presented in the word clouds (Figures 3 and 4) compare the participant responses across interviews 1 and 2. The NVivo query for this data output inspected all participant responses and identified the most used words (over five characters).

Figures 3 and 4 reveal several commonalities between the data representations for the two interviews. The word 'communication' stands out as the most common word for both interviews, followed by 'skills' and 'think'. Some common words in both interviews were 'knowledge', 'organisation', 'leader', 'approachable', 'experience', 'calming', and 'confidence'.

As the above data representation does not provide insight into the context in which these individual words were spoken, the following quotes are examples of individual participant responses and provide some context to the resultant data. In interview 1, Ange explained that:

> [I] think they need to be good with people, I think they need to have good skills in explaining things, so good communication skills, I suppose. I think they need to be able to maintain a sort of calm when someone might not necessarily be calm, or the whole situation might not necessarily be calm. I think they need to be good with putting up with not perfect conditions. I mean, we have to all go through times when we're really wet, and we don't want to be wet anymore, or cold or hot. So, I don't think you can be too precious.

John added further qualities to those listed by Ange:

> I thought that an outdoor leader would have to have a love for the outdoors and be able to express that and show it to others to be able to take people into the outdoors and help facilitate the experience with…,

with their feelings and…, I don't know how to word it, they yeah…, that they'd be able to show the guys that they were taking on the trip why they loved the outdoors and why it can be a valuable resource. I think obviously they have to be good leaders, so leadership. I think they need to be trustworthy because, if you're taking a group out you need to be able to have the trust of the group; otherwise, they're not going to follow you and I don't think they'll get the right experience out of it.

While participants' responses to Interview 2 identified many of the same qualities evident in interview 1, some responses showed an elevated conceptual understanding and knowledge due to the specific nature of the qualities discussed in their curriculum. Rosa displayed some of this elevated level of understanding by mentioning the use of 'soft' and 'hard' skills and the natural 'environment':

you will be teaching that, regardless if you're teaching or not. So, if you're an outdoor leader, you need hard skills as well as soft skills. So, you need to physically be able to do your teaching. And then, soft skills like you need to communicate. You need to sympathise with people who are having a rough time. But an outdoor leader needs to have a respect and knowledge of the environment and environmental protection and that sort of thing. They need to have knowledge of inter-personal skills, being able to work with people and being able to read where your group's at.

Sam added other qualities to Rosa's list; thereby displaying an understanding of the breadth and intricacy of the requirements of an outdoor leader:

You know, because you don't know who you're working with, you got to be quite persistent, calm, bubbly, being able to encourage those that might need a little bit more encouragement, might not find it as fun, yet

being able to calm down the one that needs calming down because they're at high risk. Being able to explain themselves well, especially when it's safety checks.

The number of qualities listed by the participants was extensive. The data surrounding the qualities concept displayed a level of understanding that developed across the participants from interview 1 to interview 2. Their responses also exhibited an understanding of the complexity of the range of qualities required of an outdoor leader.

In the above results section, participants' responses attempting to describe the qualities of an outdoor leader were presented. They provided contextualised and specific data to their idea of the 'outdoor leader'. Table 20. identifies participants' responses to the Interview 3 request for them to list five words that describe a professional. This question elicited data that was used to highlight congruency between participants' descriptions of the 'qualities' of an outdoor leader and their descriptions of a 'professional'.

Table 20.

Participant Responses: Qualities of an Outdoor Leader (Int 3)

Participant	Response – list five words to describe a professional
Beth	Knowledgeable, Competent, Understanding, Good Time Management, Passionate
Ange	Knowledgeable, Capable, Experienced, Educated, Caring
Amanda	Experience, Knowledge, Qualifications, Role model, Image appropriate (dresses the right way)
Aaron	Passionate, Objective, Current, Concise, Caring
Rosa	Responsible, Qualified, Approachable, Organised, Passionate

Table 20. Continued

Participant	Response – list five words to describe a professional
Carl	Knowledgeable, Punctual, Calm, Experienced, Reflective
James	Educated, Responsible, Hardworking, Well-trained, Obedient
Jack	Knowledgeable, Experienced, Teachable, Responsible, Empathetic

The responses in Table 20 referred to a professionals' knowledge, skill, qualifications, and experience. Several of the responses referenced 'soft skills', using words such as empathetic, approachable, and caring, as well as several 'functional' concepts, using words such as 'organised', 'punctual', 'hardworking' and 'image appropriate'. This range of responses revealed areas of consensus about the description of a professional and several differences concerning hard skills, soft skills, and functional concepts.

In interview 3, participants were also asked whether they would describe themselves as professionals. This question was not asked in the previous interview rounds, and this was the first opportunity that the participants were given an explicit opportunity to express this sentiment. Participant responses articulated a range of outcomes across a broad spectrum, with some feeling as though they were not professional and others feeling that they were professional while still engaged in their study. There were several caveats expressed concerning skills and experience requirements. When asked, 'Would you describe yourself as a professional?', Jack simply responded, "No, not yet," while Carl answered, "I don't see myself as a professional, and that's because in my view of a professional, I think they [I] need more experience." On the other hand, Beth responded differently:

Yeah, as an outdoor professional, I definitely feel like I have a basis of knowledge. Yeah, and I'm quite confident, and I have time-management skills, and I hope that I have enough to be able to help people, even just with little comments here and there, and, like, and understanding enough to pass on.

James also said, "yes, I definitely would. I wouldn't count myself as the biggest professional in the world, but I'm definitely some sort of professional."

Other participants added caveats when describing themselves as professionals, specifically that they needed to gain more experience. Rosa said, "Not probably the point when I graduate. I reckon the point when I get into an outdoor job or take my first trip outside on water; then I would consider myself a professional, not the day I graduate." In the same vein, Aaron answered that "I'm obviously a developing professional; I still feel like I am at the start of my career."

In interview 3, the participants were also asked whether they would describe themselves as an outdoor leader. This question required a more specific response to the question in the previous results section. Rather than just thinking about the broad concept of a professional, the participants had to use thoughts aligned with more industry-specific knowledge and consider whether their current knowledge and experience would equate to their idea of an outdoor leader. All responses to this question were positive, and all participants agreed that they could describe themselves as an outdoor leader. Amanda replied, "yes because I have the knowledge and experience from the past three years," while Ange answered, "yes, I would." On the other hand, Aaron was not so direct in his response because he saw himself as more of an "educator rather than leader or teacher. But if someone was to say outdoor leader, I don't sort of think twice about it, if I'm in a leader capacity at a school." The

diversity of responses relating to this thematic element reinforces the need for further consideration of the reasons for and the implications of this diversity in the following chapter.

The Professional Context of University Studies

Given that this study investigates concepts surrounding professional identity development, the researcher wanted to identify if the participants considered their study at university as a professional context or not. In interview 2, the participants were asked if they thought university was or was not a professional context. In an overwhelming response, all but two participants indicated that university was a professional context in some way. Ange's answer demonstrated that she believed the university was a professional context. She did, however, qualify that it was really fun at the same time, stating:

> I think that it's a lot of fun and - it is professional for sure. It's just really good fun at the same time, but that's probably because we've chosen the right path to go down because it can actually be fun too, it's professional.

Aaron's response indicated that the financial input for the degree and the fact he was learning from a professional meant to him that it was a professional context, he commented that:

> Well, you're paying for a proper education, so you're learning a profession…, whatever you choose to do, you're learning from experts in that field, whether its outdoor education or a law degree, you are learning from someone who is a professional in that field, so that's where you're aiming to get to, so you need to conduct yourself that way.

On the other hand, Beth clarified that "I don't see it as professional as in a job type of thing." Her comment that she did not see university as a professional context was congruent with Shaz's response of "uni itself…..no, it's more the outcome of uni." Nevertheless, these two comments were outliers, with most participants indicating that university was a professional context.

Thoughts About Future Career After Graduation

The researcher identified that having the participants reflect on their ideas about their post-graduation careers would provide valuable data to understand their professional identity development over their degrees. In interviews 1 and 2, the participants were asked to detail their thoughts on their post-graduation careers. While their responses were diverse, some common threads ran through the answers. In the first interview, Aaron indicated that "well, I really want to get into teaching," and Nat responded, "I want to go into teaching, I'd love to just teach." Sam proposed that "hopefully if I can get a position in the High School working as the Outdoor Ed teacher and Student Welfare kind of facilitating all the camps would be good." Many participants echoed these comments about working in an educational setting.

Another common thread in the responses to this interview 1 question was the desire to travel post-graduation. Participants felt that completing the course provided them with an opportunity to travel with a skill set that would open up employment or adventure opportunities. John captured this aspiration: "I'd love to travel and potentially work at the same time to support that." James also indicated that "I'd like to go overseas after I get this qualification, I'd like to go to Canada, do some rafting and stuff. It's supposed to be amazing out there and just work over there or anywhere around the world." Rosa supported this desire to undertake freelancing work by

identifying: "I want to go into group leading and then eventually just freelance kind of thing once I've got a few connections and experiences leading other groups."

In interview 2, the participants' responses to the same question aligned with their interview 1 responses. For example, Aaron again indicated his desire to teach: "my goal is to get into teaching." However, some responses expressed a desire to continue their education by completing a Masters degree in teaching. For example, Rosa said, "so, I finish this course and I do my Masters of teaching," and Paula added" I would love to do my Masters." Carl further qualified his desire to move into a teaching role by adding that, "I'm leaning towards primary teaching. Just because I've always wanted to do that - and I've basically just picked Outdoor Ed because I like Outdoor Ed."

This response thread concerning post-graduation travel and freelance work continued into interview 2, with Beth expressing her desire for "just going and being a guide in a random country for a while." Renee supported this desire by stating that "I never wanted to travel until I started outdoor ed, suddenly, I wanted to travel and being a bit younger is probably more flexibility, I'm not tied down obviously." Amanda provided a more philosophical response about her post-graduation career:

> Because I like being in the outdoors and I like being getting active and
>
> not sitting still all the time and just doing nothing. I don't want to get to
>
> the end of my life, and people go what have you done with your life, and
>
> I say, "just sat in an office for fifty years".

Her response provided insight into post-graduation thoughts that were not focussed on specific employment.

It was noted through the data that the participants' responses were fairly consistent over interview rounds 1 and 2, with many concepts evident in both interview

rounds and participants having similar individual responses across both interviews. The data presented thus far have predominantly focussed on how the participants defined or described concepts apparent within the research that focussed on the professional context of outdoor leadership. The following section delves into the themes present in the data that focus more on the participants' conceptualisations of identity.

Identity – Personal and Professional Concepts

During interviews 1 and 2, participants answered questions about how their family or friends would describe or define them personally and professionally. The answers were used to generate data relating to a range of identity-related concepts. Rather than explicitly asking the participants to portray their identity, the question phrasing required the students to reflect on how they thought people perceived them. The researcher hoped this framing of the questions would allow participants to provide data about their identity without getting stuck in the 'complex' concept of identity so early in the research.

In interview 1, half of the participants struggled to answer regarding how their family or friends would describe or define them personally and professionally. Among others, Stella, John, Rosa, and Tim initially responded, "I don't know." Aaron mentioned, "I haven't really thought about how they describe me personally or professionally," and Tim added to his earlier comment, "it's a tough one talking about yourself." At the same time, James said, "I don't know, I'm not good at describing myself." Although these participants struggled to answer the question with specific information, other participants were able to provide more detailed responses.

Interview 1 responses concerning personal traits conveyed positive concepts,

such as "happy and energetic and fun" (John), "committed, caring and thoughtful" (Jim), and "patient, organised and proactive" (Renee). At this point in the data collection, there were no responses to this question that contained any personal traits or concepts that could be considered negative. Interview 1 responses identified professional traits focussed on concepts such as "hard-working" (Aaron, Paula, and Beth) and "a good leader" (Beth, Carl, and Renee). However, five of the 18 participants did use professional descriptors with a negative connotation when trying to define or describe how others saw them professionally. For example, James stated that "they'd say I can be lazy," Jim reflected that "I'm unorganised and they would say I lack confidence," Nat used the term "immature," and Tim said that people would describe him as "laid back," professionally speaking.

When considering the data for the same question in interview 2, there were several similarities to the interview 1 data. One response from James summed up the feeling of most participants: "I hate this question, it stumps me every time." His response indicated that the question was something that he did not understand. Like many participants, James required further information from the researcher to understand the question and provide an appropriate response. With this extra information, the participants were able to provide some responses, and there were many personal and professional traits identified in interview 2, such as "knowledgeable, outgoing and likes to have fun" (Jack), "passionate and dedicated" (John), and "motivated and driven" (James). While these descriptors give some insight into how the participants thought others perceived them, when considering the concept of identity within the data context, it became apparent that these additional pertinent themes related to enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development.

Ange, Beth, and James acknowledged that the development of confidence

played a large part in establishing their professional identity. Ange identified the importance of:

> confidence, definitely a lot more confidence, and being capable to be able to do things and feeling that way. I suppose not even just being it, but feeling capable because you can-- you know, I would feel capable to take a group bushwalking, and I feel capable to teach a class, you know, in a school, and I certainly am capable to run the camps I do at work. So, I think that that's a really big part of it. And also, probably that people can see-- like, other people-- not necessarily, like, tell you that, but you can kind of-- you have respect in the area, that you can clearly see that people aren't just going, 'What the hell is she doing?'.

Beth also identified:

> Most of that comfort in the profession has come from, uh, actually being outdoors, actually being in the experience and having the physical experience of, um, different, uh, things that could happen in the outdoors, with different groups, and just the multiple ways you can come at it and that was a really comfortable, positive way to build up that confidence.

James's comments on developing his professional identity supported Beth and Ange's: "I guess being confident in myself, my own, um, abilities leading and all that sort of stuff."

In addition to confidence, Aaron identified another enabler for developing his professional identity: "it's the experiences that I've had; there's just been a shifting attitude towards learning, attitude towards the outdoors. I suppose experiences have been provided for me that changed the way I conduct myself, my attitude, and

approaches towards learning." Aaron also went further, explaining that, for him, it was the challenge present in his experiences that further enabled his professional identity development: "while I've had, lots of fun, enjoyable experiences that have been good memories, while I've learnt a lot, I think, looking back, it's the challenges that I've had that I look at, that I go, 'Okay, I've developed'." Ange echoed Aaron's advocacy for a depth of experience, noting that the depth of experience provided during her university degree supported her professional identity development because she was able to see the bigger picture:

> But I think it's made me understand what I want to be as a professional, as well. Like, I think initially I knew I wanted to teach, and I knew I loved ski instructing, and so that's why I loved the outdoors, and that sort of all matched up. But now it's a lot more than that; it's more about growing children and people as individuals, and whether that's in the classroom or in the field, like, it kind of all overlaps to me. And yeah, it's kind of one big sort of thing; like, it doesn't-- it's not separate anymore.

Ange's realisation about the scope of the role of an outdoor leader was similar to Carl's pivotal moment when he considered what enabled the development of his professional identity. His statement, "Yeah, I think it's a much broader job title than it sounds," indicated a change in his understanding of what was required of him as an outdoor leader, throughout studying for his qualification. He followed this comment with:

> there's much more that goes into it. They can be an outdoor leader, but they're also babysitters, they're also counsellors, at times, they're also first aiders. They're everything when those kids are with them. So, um, there's much more that goes into it. There's much more behind the scenes that you have no idea what's going on, yeah. And then there are

finances, there's a logistical business side to it. Yeah, there's a lot that goes into it.

The data showed that most participants came to recognise that the role of an outdoor leader is broad and multifaceted. Through the comments provided, this recognition of the role was identified as an enabler in developing their professional identity. Beth reflected on the value of positive feedback as an enabler for the development of her professional identity; when she attempted to describe her job/role as an outdoor leader to other people, and she received a positive response:

I tell people what I'm doing a lot, because they're always kind of like, 'Oh, that sounds so cool. You have such a good life', and I'm like, 'Yeah, I do. That's what I chose to do, and I worked hard to get here.' It kind of just makes me proud; I'm just like, 'Yeah, I really enjoy what I'm doing'.

This need to feel proud, and the impact of positive responses from people regarding the participants' choice to be an outdoor leader or the job of an outdoor leader, were recurring themes of professional identity development. These themes were so prominent in the data that further in-depth discussion occurs in Theme 4 – Family, Friends, General Social Perceptions, and their Impacts.

Seven of the 11 participants who completed the study's final interview identified a further enabler to developing professional identity: the need to continue some form of post-graduate education to develop further and/or consolidate their professional identity. Amanda noted, "I'm thinking about doing my masters afterwards, which I think I'm definitely going to do," and Beth commented, "in the future, I want to do the Master's of Bush Adventure Therapy." Carl suggested that he would like to acquire specific locational knowledge and qualifications: "I'd love to get that ticket, and you know, one day maybe go on work on the river Nile running a rafting company."

However, responses from the participants where they identify future professional development post-graduation signpost the cognisance of the cohort regarding their current professional identity and/or lack thereof while engaged in their undergraduate degree.

Within the data acknowledging numerous enablers of professional identity development, there was also evidence of inhibitors of professional identity development. These inhibitors predominantly revolved around the perceptions of family and friends. Rosa provided one example of these perceptions: "people wouldn't see me as a professional in that industry; it would just be seen as a pastime or, like, a leisure activity." Similarly, John commented, "Every now and then you might get someone who thinks it's just a bludge because you just wander around outside." Thirteen participants commented that others expressed negativity towards the course they were studying or their choice of profession. Due to the prominence of this finding in the data, further exploration is undertaken in Theme 4 – Family, Friends, General Social Perceptions and their Impacts.

This research investigates how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity. A consistent theme across the interviews was that participants remained happy with their choice despite the external negativity received about their course choice or future professional direction. In interview 3, seven of the 11 participants referenced this concept regarding their professional choice. For example, Beth commented, "That's what I chose to do, and I worked hard to get here. It kind of just makes me proud; I'm just like, 'Yeah, I really enjoy what I'm doing'." Amanda's comment reinforced Beth's:

> personally, it doesn't affect me because I don't really-- I don't care. Like,
>
> I probably used to think, 'Oh, maybe they're right,' or worry about what

people thought. But, um, now I don't really-- like, as long as I'm happy what I'm doing and I do love what I'm doing, yeah, I don't really-- people's opinion doesn't really affect me.

Ange's idea concerning the negativity she has also received summarised these previous remarks and exposed a maturing professional identity by espousing that it "probably just makes me more determined to change their minds." Ange's sentiment indicated the challenges the participants experienced in developing their professional identity when confronted with external negativity. This line of questioning surrounding identity also prompted the participants to expose the concept of multiple identities within their development on several occasions.

The concept of multiple identities was evident in several participants' responses, in which they identified a difference between their personal and professional identities. This data appeared in response to the participants being asked if they presented themselves differently in personal and professional situations. In response to this question, Beth answered, "I'm a lot less guarded when I'm in personal situations, um, whereas in professional situations, I'm often testing the ground first." Ange responded:

I think in professional situations, like, work situations, you need to kind of be a professional, I suppose; you need to have all those qualities and show them pretty much all the time, whereas in a personal situation, you can kind of just be more-- like, let your guard down, be yourself, you know you need to have, a face, I think, in professional situations, which doesn't mean you can't be personal, but I think that there's still, you know, part of it that needs to stay-- uh, yeah, because you still want to be seen as a professional.

Carl expressed his agreement with the idea of multiple identities when he indicated that his leadership capacity varied between personal and professional situations:

> I probably do, yeah. Uh, I feel as though a professional situation, I'm much-- I'm actually-- like, in a friendship group, I'm a-- I'm not a leader; I'm a step back, um, because there's stronger personalities in my group, so I'll just step back and do whatever. But in a professional setting-- and it was even the same, I guess, in a way, on that camp, because it was kind of a friendship, even though it wasn't a friendship. I fell back into that role. Uh, but in a professional setting, like at work, I'm-- I automatically just walk in, and I'm the leader.

Most of the participants acknowledged that they did act differently in different situations. However, when presented with the concept of multiple identities, Amanda responded that she had "never thought about it before." When the researcher explained the question and concept, Amanda replied that she "would probably handle it the same" when provided with an example and asked to think about she would resolve it from personal and professional perspectives. Aaron explained, "I think I did have a different personal and professional identity, but I think now it is kind of very much-- they're quite the same now." His statement acknowledges that his perspectives on multiple identities have shifted throughout his study. He further suggested, "I think I just naturally take my professionalism into my personal life now, so I feel like they're kind of interlinked now."

In interview 3, seven participants noted a difference between masculine and feminine identities in the role of an outdoor leader. Beth commented on the interplay between masculine and feminine identities:

But yeah, I think it's very important to have that balance, um, between, um-- because the outdoors is a very physical place, and it's-- the sports that we do in the outdoors and the activities that we run, um, are often very physical. Um, but you still need the female aspects of-- to help build that empathy-- the feminine aspects to build empathy and that sort of thing. But that's-- there's no reason why, like, male outdoor leaders don't do that, as well. Um, as a well-rounded leader, it's nice to be able to do both.

Ange also articulated her need to adopt multiple identities (masculine and feminine) and how it is crucial to find the balance of those identities to solve all of the problems she comes across when working as an outdoor leader:

you need to be able to do both, I think, because one isn't good without the other, in my mind. Um, I think sometimes, as a woman, it's daunting, because you, you might not have the actual physical strength that a man has, but I think that if you really want to do that, then you just have to find ways around it.

The use of specific masculine and feminine attributes was explicit in Aaron's response in the area with his statement that:

Obviously, there is-- you know, females have this sort of-- more loving nature, but that's not to say a male can't have that as well. Like, you know, males are sort of naturally stronger, but that definitely doesn't mean a female can't be strong enough to pick up the pack and walk over the hill.

In Carl and James' responses to this line of thought and questioning, they both acknowledged that they were comfortable with the concept of needing both

masculine and feminine identities to fulfil the role of the outdoor leader. Carl conveyed:

> I think I do well with both. I can, um-- I'm not the most masculine person there is, but I, I feel like I kind of sit in the middle and I, I can facilitate discussions and stuff really well and-- um, because that's something I enjoy, but I also enjoy the masculine achievement kind of stuff as well.
>
> Yeah, I'm quite comfortable with both.

James commented, "Definitely, yeah. I'm comfortable with that. I've never had a problem with it." Seven of the 11 participants in interview 3 acknowledged the notion of masculine and feminine identities and how they interact with the concept of multiple identities. This acknowledgement established the relative importance of this concept; therefore, the concept of multiple identities will receive further exploration in more detail in the following discussion chapter.

As a next step in investigating how the participants developed their professional identity, they were asked in interview 3 whether they identified with a particular adventure-based activity or a specialist area of knowledge. This question was positioned in interview 3 at the end of the participant's degree, where their experience would have impacted their overall responses. The resultant data provides another perspective (that of an activity specialist) on their professional identity development. Table 21. displays the participant responses.

Table 21.

Responses Regarding Identification with a Specific Activity

Participant Name	Adventure Based Activity	Specialist Area of Knowledge
Beth	Bushwalking	
Ange	Skiing, Bushwalking	
Amanda	Skiing, Snowboarding, Bushwalking High and low ropes	Residential camps
Aaron		Generalist
Rosa	Water based activities	
Carl	Bushwalking	
James	Canoeing	
Jack	Cross Country Skiing Alpine Skiing, Mountain Biking	

As seen in Table 21, seven of the eight participants identified with a particular adventure-based activity and considered that activity to be part of their professional identity. Aaron did not identify a specific adventure-based activity and commented, "I don't think I really pigeonhole myself to thinking that I'm an expert rock climber or expert mountain bike rider or expert leader." He further added, "at the moment, the roles that I would be more suited towards doing would be that sort of generalist type of stuff." Amanda was the only participant who identified an adventure-based activity and a specialist area of knowledge.

The above identity-related comments relate to the links participants perceived between their professional identity and outdoor leadership experience. As identity is a

central concept in this research, some ideas and concepts presented in previous sections will link to results in future themes. This linking will allow for further analysis of the results provided by the participants.

Levels of Prior Outdoor Experiences

In keeping with the contention that an individual's identity develops over time and is the result of their internal and external experiences, participants were asked about their levels of outdoor-related experiences before commencing their study. The responses yielded data that assisted with the study of the development of the participants' professional identities. Given that the participants came into their courses with different levels of outdoor experience, they were asked in interview 1 to identify their outdoor experiences prior to their studies. Their responses were varied and displayed many diverse areas of focus in the data.

All but one of the participants indicated that they had some outdoor experience prior to commencing their course. These experiences mainly involved exposure with family, friends and/or school. For example, James responded, "I've done recreation camps since prep, every year gone camping with families a lot," and Beth answered that, "from the beginning, I started camping with my family." Amanda mentioned her previous school-based experiences: "At school, we did canoeing, rafting…, we did a bit of abseiling, surfing, bushwalking." Jim also indicated the year levels at school that provided him with previous outdoor experiences: "Well, most of them would have been about year seven, eight, nine, those kinds of camps." Renee discussed her experiences with friends: "I'd go camping with some friends every year, once a year."

As well as identifying specific people in the participants' previous experiences, the data also revealed the settings where those previous experiences took place.

Three of the 16 participants identified a workplace as the location of a previous experience. Amanda explained, "I got a job at a residential camp doing high and low ropes," and Aaron said, "I ended up doing Camp America and working on a high ropes course." Ange answered, "when I finished school, I went to Canada and became a ski instructor for two years." Sam was the only person who indicated that they could not recall any outdoor experiences prior to commencing their course: "none before this course, I had not done any outdoor living at all." In interview 1, participants were asked to identify the adventure-based activities they participated in before their course. These experiences ranged across many adventure-based activities and are summarised in Table 22.

Table 22.

Adventure-Based Activity Participation Prior to Course

Participant Name	Adventure Based Activity
Beth	Bushwalking, Mountain Biking, Canoeing
Ange	Skiing
Amanda	Skiing, Snowboarding, Bushwalking, High and Low Ropes, Canoeing, Rafting, Abseiling, Surfing, Camping
Aaron	Rock climbing, High Ropes, Canoeing, Bushwalking
Rosa	Rock climbing, Canoeing, Kayaking, High and Low Ropes, Rafting, Sailing
Carl	Water Sports, Trail-bike Riding, Canoeing, Surfing
James	Kayaking, Snowboarding, Skiing, Rock climbing
Jack	Horse Riding, Mountain Biking, Sailing, Kayaking, Camping, Bushwalking, Rock Climbing

Table 22. Continued

Participant Name	Adventure Based Activity
Dave	Camping
John	Hiking, Mountain Biking
Jim	Canoeing, Abseiling, Indoor Rock Climbing, Bushwalking,
Nat	Abseiling
Paula	Rafting, Bushwalking, Camping
Renee	Surfing, Rock Climbing, Abseiling, Bushwalking
Stella	Bushwalking, Canoeing, Skiing
Tim	Bushwalking

Table 22. identifies bushwalking as the most prominent activity (nine of 16 participants), with canoeing second (seven of 16 participants) and rock climbing third (six of 16 participants). Several participants indicated that many previous activities had been conducted at school.

Regarding their previous school-based outdoor experiences, 11 participants in interview 1 indicated that they had some outdoor-related experience while at school. The participants indicated that their school-based experiences ranged across several different year levels and contexts. Carl and Tim stated that their previous school-based experiences were "only in year 12," whereas Stella replied that her experiences were in "year 11 Outdoor Ed and year 10." Rosa specified that, for her, "it was compulsory until year nine." Beth and James revealed that for their school-based outdoor

experiences, they both did the Duke of Edinburgh. Four participants pointed out that they did not have any outdoor experiences while at school, with Ange, Dave and Nat simply replying, "No I didn't," and Sam indicating, "No it wasn't available."

As the participants reported such a diverse range of outdoor experiences before commencing their degree, collecting data during interview 1 on each participant's reasons for enrolling in the course would further provide awareness of factors influencing the development of professional identity which could be factored into the development of the subsequent interview rounds.

Reasons for Enrolling in the Course

There are many reasons why someone enrols in a university degree. Given that a professional developmental need often drives the choice of degree, it was expected that an understanding of why study participants enrolled in their degrees would yield useful data when investigating and understanding how their professional identity developed. The participants listed numerous reasons for enrolling in their chosen course. Five of the 16 responses indicated a link between Physical Education (PE) and Outdoor Education teaching. James highlighted how he started a P.E degree at another university but then changed degrees:

> I did a semester there and passed my year, but I didn't enjoy it and I always wanted to do Outdoor Ed and stuff, so I thought I'll drop out, and then I worked for a semester and came to do this, and ever since I've been on this course I've been…, I've just loved it, it's been great.

Renee added to the link between PE and Outdoor Education by suggesting, "I was originally doing youth work, I've always wanted to do work with the high school kind of

age group, and now I'm in PE and Outdoor Ed." Nat's reason for enrolling in the course was also linked to PE. She compared the two distinct course areas:

Well, I was going to do PE but then my friends did Outdoor Ed in high school and they were saying how it was much better than PE, how it's more practical. I was going through my friends Outdoor Ed stuff and I was going through my PE stuff and I thought Outdoor Ed looks much better and I'm like I'll try it for the first few weeks and I liked it…, it's not the course, it's more the people in the course I like and I think that's what keeps me going.

Beth identified the course's practical nature as a reason for her enrolment: "I've seen how practical it is and that's really important to me like I don't want to do lots of theory." Dave's comments aligned with Beth's—"Mainly because I just don't like desk jobs"—and indicated his desire to study a course with high levels of practical content and learning.

Experiences at work were another prominent theme when the participants discussed their reasons for enrolling in the course. Aaron explained that work experiences spurred on his choice of course: "I ended up doing Camp America and working on a high ropes course and working with kids has been in the back of my mind, I thought I'd do Outdoor Ed, I thought that fits in well with sports." The link between course choice and work experiences was also a feature of Rosa's response: "I took a gap year last year and completely changed my views of what I wanted to do because I got into a law course but then I took a gap position at the camp and I sort of loved it, so I changed to outdoor Ed." Two of the 16 participants mentioned that looking for a course they could enjoy was an important element of their decision. Jack highlighted that "when I was looking at the course card, this was probably the most

enjoyable one I thought that I'd like to do." Jack's comment aligns with Sam's response: "It sounded like something that I could see myself doing and not getting bored."

Two participants provided reasons for enrolling in the course that did not align closely with the rest of the participants. Shaz's reason for enrolling was to pass on a set of skills to her children, so they would "be able to go out and do things that I did." Shaz also added that she could "have more activities that I'm confident in doing and taking my children to do" because she wanted them to "appreciate going outdoors and being in the middle of nowhere." However, Paula explained that she enrolled simply "because it was the only Uni. still accepting applications." Although different in tone, these concluding comments provided valid data on developing the student's professional identity by offering insight into the participants' motivations.

Emotional Connection

All participants expressed some emotional connection to their choice of a university course, career, and associated professional identity. Additionally, several students identified working as an outdoor leader as a lifestyle rather than a job. For example, Chris acknowledged that:

> outdoor ed would just be handy for getting work when I want to go travelling, so you know it could get us a job overseas for a few months.
>
> We get to freelance here and there, it's more of a lifestyle than a job.

These expressions of emotional connection occurred across all three interviews. They involved physical and psychological pleasure concepts, connection to the environment and specific geographical locations, life choices, personal development, and social cohesion with peers, family, and friends.

Beth's responses regarding her emotional connection ranged across several elements. She indicated that the social bonding and community development experienced during her degree were things that she did not wholly expect:

> The community's really important for us as humans to feel connected to each other and to feel part of something…I knew the outdoor course would be a great catalyst for relationship building, but I sort of didn't realise the extent of it until-- especially when I first started and I was like, 'Yeah, these are really cool people, but I guess we'll only hang out in class,' to the end of our last trip, everyone in tears, like, not being able to see each other again.

Jack added to the above concept when he stated, "I'm closer with some people in the outdoor course than other people I was hanging out with outside of Uni." This emotional connection promotes the idea that he had formed strong bonds with his course peers. Sam's comment regarding the social and emotional connection she had with her peers added strength to Jack's:

> Outdoor Ed is actually something where I enjoy coming into Uni because it's a different relationship with everyone compared to going into a normal lecture. Like everyone walks in and everyone's hugging each other and all the rest of it and then you'll walk into a normal lecture and people look at you funny if you're walking around doing that.

The concept of emotional connection and enjoying university due to the outdoor components of their degree was echoed by John: "I think a lot of the time I'm really eager to get to Uni and enjoy the classes." Beth also explained, "then I started this course and like yeah Outdoor Ed will keep me sane".

The environment is also a prominent theme when considering the data on the participants' emotional connections to their developing professional identity. Nine of the participants made specific comments regarding this connection. Ange expressed her environmental connection: "I sat down and thought about what I really wanted to do, and I loved being outdoors, so your course was basically perfect." She added more context to this statement, explaining, "but I definitely realised that I would get a lot of peace out of being in the outdoors, and being able to bring that into my University degree was just a really cool thing." Beth complimented Ange's comments through her affirmation, "I've had lots of really nice memories of sitting in remote areas, or even not so remote, like at Wilson's prom, and just being really in touch with where I am, and just finding a calm space." James also referenced the idea of an emotional connection to the environment: "Just being on the snow and being high up in the environment is just incredible and the views are awesome." John also noted that:

> Being outdoors and being somewhere new that I've never been before and just seeing new things is something I enjoy to do. I find it a real release, especially if I have had a stressful time or haven't had some time away. And if I'm not having fun then I'm not doing something right am I?

These comments on emotional connections to the environment also allowed the participants to indicate the psychological benefit that being in the outdoors gave them through their university experiences. For example, Aaron highlighted, "Yeah, it was a good rewarding experience, really, like coming home after the trip, I really felt like I was refreshed and, a bit more of a positive attitude again." Also, John explained, "I find it a real release especially if I have had a stressful time or haven't had some time away," and Ange answered, "I love that on trips that I'm one hundred percent in the

moment, and I'm not worrying about anything else." Ange summed up many of the participants' thoughts on emotional connections to their course and their resulting professional identity development when she emphatically referred to her course: "This is my life; this is pretty awesome." The emotional connections that many participants expressed during the interviews provided further insight into their reasons for choosing their course, their motivations for staying in it, and the more philosophical elements of their developing professional identity.

Industry Related

Gathering data concerning the participants' knowledge of the outdoor industry, and looking for links in the data between this knowledge and their professional identity development, was crucial to further understanding the study participants. In interview 1, the participants answered questions about their understanding of an Outdoor Leader's work and responsibilities before commencing their study. Locating this question at the commencement of their study served to identify their prior knowledge regarding the Outdoor Industry. All participants responded to this question and communicated a diversity of concepts regarding their knowledge of the outdoor industry.

Several answers were very general. Amanda indicated, "I can teach at camps and take people on trips," and Aaron stated, "they take people on adventure activities and that sort of stuff." This general type of response was continued by John, who said, "Yeah, it's pretty broad," and Paula, who spoke of "Camp leaders, tour guides, I guess, teaching opportunities." Sixteen of 22 participants responded that their understanding of what the industry required was some form of leadership of a group in or through outdoor activity. Stella supported this concept with her response of "Leading hikes and

bushwalks and ski trips," and Sam agreed with this concept by proposing "like there are groups that you can like be in charge of and facilitate the activities".

The employment location was also prominent in the responses to the question about prior industry knowledge, with fourteen participants directly mentioning residential/school camps. For example, Stella answered, "there are camps that you can work at," and Rosa proposed, "You can be in a residential camp." Other employment locations, such as working in retail shops associated with the outdoor industry, were mentioned. For example, Nat suggested that "you can work in one of the shops," as did Beth: "I guess you can work in the retail shops." Some participants used specific adventure-based activities to show their understanding of the work and responsibilities of an Outdoor leader. Ange mentioned "skiing, climbing", and Dave suggested "Snowboarding, rock climbing, ropes courses"' James acknowledged "snorkelling and rock climbing", and Stella added "hikes and bushwalks and ski trips."

Participants also noted specific operational and functional requirements in their responses to the question, 'what are the roles and responsibilities of the outdoor leader?'. Ange acknowledged, "I understand that outdoor leaders have a duty of care," and Amanda specified, "They're the organisers, as well. So, like, organising and planning the trip," as well as mentioning "Safety, costs and medicals." These comments were representative of those provided by 11 of the 22 participants. Within the results of this question in interview 1, only one participant responded by using developmental outcomes generally associated with the role of an outdoor leader. Aaron indicated that the outdoor leader could "teach people better self-awareness and build up rapport", which demonstrated his developing understanding of the role of an outdoor leader.

The breadth of responses provided by participants in interview 1 to the question regarding their understanding of an Outdoor Leader's work and responsibilities before commencing their course provided a data set in which the development of their professional identity could undergo examination. This examination occurred by comparing and contrasting their answers to the same question asked at the end of their studies in interview 3. The question, "Do you understand what the industry requires of you as an outdoor professional?" was asked in interview 3. This question elicited a range of participant responses, with all but one participant expressing some level of development regarding this knowledge throughout their study. This understanding was apparent when Beth, using the example of qualifications and standards, stated, "yeah, I do, in the sense of, qualifications and standards of practice, and level of understanding and knowledge. But that's something that's constantly changing, as well, so, um, it's something that I definitely need to keep on top of." Carl also used a similar concept when commenting on finding future employment: "I feel like rocking up to somewhere for employment, that I would already be, in the eyes of qualifications, I'd already be more experienced than half the people that work there, because they've just come in and been trained." James' provided a more conceptual assertion regarding his understanding of what the industry required of an outdoor leader that did not focus on qualifications like the previous participants' comments:

> you know, on a really good day, our job can be the best, but when everything goes bad, not a lot of people can handle that sort of situation. You know, when you have days when you're working out in the rain all day for three days in a row, you get a bit down. But, um, you know, it's easy. We've all gone through it.

James used his practical experiences more contextually to demonstrate his knowledge of the requirements with this statement. On the other hand Jack used a range of group management or facilitation skills concepts to prove his understanding:

> being able to lead a group, um, still being, like, disciplinary, like, not just letting them run around and do whatever they want; you've still got to be able to control a group. Um, but also have a knowledge base to teach them at the same time.

The one participant who struggled to answer this question was Amanda, who provided a vague response. She said, "Um, uh, I don't know. Yeah? I don't know." When questioned further on this topic by the researcher, Amanda added, "I haven't had, like, a chance-- I just haven't-- myself, I haven't gone out and done more to be a leader," which did not serve to clear up the confusion of her first response. Except for Amanda, all participants' responses highlighted a level of growth in their understanding of this topic in the period between interview 1 and interview 3.

The above results have expressed the depth and breadth of the data related to investigating links between outdoor leadership experience and professional identity. The next section explores the results relating to the largest thematic grouping arising from the analysis of the interviews: Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors. This theme will consider this enabling and inhibiting concept, extend the investigation of the factors specific to the participants' course curriculum, and reveal data that can further aid in investigating how university outdoor leadership students develop their professional identity.

Theme 3 – Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors.

The interview process data generated the distinct theme of 'Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors'. The researcher anticipated that the university course curriculum would be essential in enabling or inhibiting the participants' professional identity development. The thematic analysis of the data highlighted numerous curriculum-related concepts as elements of professional identity development. This section of results will focus on five sub-themes:

1. General curriculum-related concepts;

2. The first year of study-related concepts;

3. Knowledge and skill development through the curriculum;

4. Personal and professional development through the curriculum; and

5. Difficulty with professional field requirements.

General Curriculum-Related Concepts

This sub-theme stretched across many general curriculum-related concepts and was represented in data from all three interview rounds. The participants reported many memorable learning experiences during their study that positively impacted their professional identity development. Notably, 12 participants identified memorable experiences related predominantly to specific activities, locations, or social settings. Five participants identified the Bogong High Plains Bushwalk they completed towards the end of their first year as a memorable experience. For example, Ange said, "Bogong was pretty memorable because it was the first time we were on our own and we managed it, so it was kind of cool." Beth also mentioned the memorable experience of the "Bogong Bushwalk." John agreed with Ange regarding the opportunity offered by the Bogong Bushwalk: "I really enjoyed being able to plan the trip for yourself so

you can decide where you want to go." Participants also highlighted the popularity and role of the semi-supported supervision style that this field teaching offered in the curriculum. The participants mentioned other locations. Renee identified the "Murray River" and the "Grampians," Shaz mentioned the "Murray River," and Beth added "Mt. Alexander." These reflections articulate that the locations used within the curriculum contributed to memorable experiences.

Participants frequently mentioned adventure-based activities as memorable experiences. John mentioned "Rock climbing," Sam highlighted her "Canoeing" experiences and Beth and James both indicated their memorable experiences involved "the swiftwater rescue and rafting." Sam identified "Mountain Biking and Abseiling," and Jack responded generally: "I loved all of the adventure activities that we did." The frequent occurrence and breadth of activities appearing in the memorable experiences of the participants highlighted these activities as enablers to the development of professional identity.

Participants also drew attention to socialisation concepts within the course curriculum as memorable experiences. John reported that it was prior to the first field experience that he was "excited to spend time with new people to form strong relationships and get some good connections." Carl indicated that one of his memorable experiences from the course curriculum was "the friendships that have grown particularly from the outdoor ed side." Beth acknowledged the first field experience's impact on the wider group of students from a social perspective: "it was where everyone sort of came together and you realised that you get to spend three years with this amazing group of people, get a taste of everything that you're going to be trying."

Five participants responded in a way that the researcher considered a comment on specific curriculum improvements needed in the courses. Ange suggested that she thought the course structure needed more units of study so she could "develop more, hard skills, which I think I could've done more of, if I had done extra subjects." Beth acknowledged that she wanted to cover more "bush adventure therapy" content. Amanda wanted "maybe more chances to take groups out as I find it difficult doing peer stuff as they know exactly the same as you," indicating that it would be good to spend time in the field leading groups that were not her peers during the course. Carl identified that he would have liked more "theory in regards to environmental stuff" and further acknowledged that "I think for an outdoor leader, it's a very thorough course, but for an outdoor ed teacher, I think it probably needs more environmental aspects." Jack also suggested that reductionist pressure created by the university was creating a curriculum need within the course for future students: "I think each year the field components seem to be getting more diluted, because of what the uni expects."

Three participants identified the level of academic challenge in the course as a curriculum element that they grappled with throughout their course. Rosa recognised that she "struggled a lot in grasping those concepts like, articles and stuff like that. I found that really challenging and I still do." Ange supported this comment by adding that "I kind of find it hard theoretically." Carl concurred with this issue:

> I found the theory side of it sometimes a bit challenging just purely because at the start of the year I came in thinking, oh I knew outdoor ed, it's going to be all practical, and then I started, and then we had to do the readings and everything and I couldn't kind of get my head around it.

These general curriculum comments provided the researcher with valuable insights into specific elements of professional identity development throughout the participants' study.

First-Year Related Concepts

Data on the participants' first-year curriculum experience was necessary for the study. It provided insights into their foundational experiences in the university setting and an understanding of elements related to professional identity development. This section will focus on the themes of the 'challenges of the first year' and participants 'enjoyment of the first year'.

When it came to identifying challenges within the first year of their studies, the participants focussed on the physicality and mental challenges of the fieldwork, time management, and working with groups. Seven of the participants reported that the physicality of the fieldwork was challenging. Aaron, Beth, and James agreed that the fieldwork was "Physically challenging," and Renee suggested, "I found it physically challenging but not so over challenging that it was becoming a bad experience." Sam indicated that there were mental challenges associated with the fieldwork: "Mentally, it's tough because if you're scared of… like, I was scared of mountain biking. If you're scared of going downhill it's, you know, it's challenging but again, the staff managed to help me through it all." Paula also commented that in her fieldwork experiences, "Mental challenges were overcoming fears mainly." James concurred that there were mental challenges, noting that "during trips like going to the Murray, it pelted down rain for three days. That was mentally difficult, but it was definitely good to get through that and overcome it." James added that he thought:

everything is challenging. I guess in each campout, I would set out to try

my hardest to learn as much as possible. So, in every way it's going to

be challenging for me, because I'm trying to get as much information in

as possible. Yeah, I wouldn't really say anything was easy. It was all

challenging one way or another.

Study participants also commented on the time management required during their first

year of study. Aaron provided a broad statement concerning the juggling of

commitments that he found challenging:

I think it was keeping on top of things. Like where you work, because

you're going away so much as well and you work here, here, and here

……this is your work, you've got something going on in one subject,

something going on in another subject, then your wife's away sort of

thing, so to try and concentrate on what you're doing and where you are,

and then having that sort of stuff at the back of your mind as well. Yes,

it was pretty much the most challenging thing.

Shaz indicated that juggling her other education-based units around her outdoor

fieldwork was challenging because "we are going away all of the time," which also

caused some emotional challenges for her "being away from my boys." Stella agreed

it was a challenge "just getting things organized and making sure, you know, you're

on top of everything."

Six of the participants identified working within a group as a challenge during

their first year. For example, Renee stated:

I knew that things like working around a group will be the most mentally

challenging thing for people, like living with people for a long time, it can

push the limits a little bit for some people. Yeah, but like, mentally you

have to be patient with the person and stuff like that.

However, Renee qualified these comments, explaining that:

I found it really easy to get along with people and to get along with the

staff, so that was really welcoming, so it is easy to come into a class with

everyone who is fairly like-minded, and then that helps you within your

groups as well. So, I found they are easy to work with.

Beth supported that group work in the curriculum was "a little difficult at times." Many

participants reported some level of challenge with the curriculum in the first year of

their degree. However, numerous responses throughout the interviews identified

positive enablers or levels of enjoyment attained through the first-year curriculum.

Twelve participants identified an aspect of the first-year curriculum that enabled

their professional identity development. These enablers focussed on elements of the

curriculum promoting overall enjoyment of study and that utilised the power of social

interaction to support learning and student engagement. Some of the participants'

responses were general, such as the comment by James, who stated, "It was great,

just unreal" and Jack, who stated, "The year was great. It went really fast, but I really

enjoyed it." Amanda summed up the general comments in this area: "It was good,

really good. I really, really enjoy it, I have really enjoyed the first year, I don't think

there were any down points." Six participants further contextualised these general

responses, indicating that the first-year curriculum enabled their professional identity

development by keeping them engaged at university. For example, Beth mentioned

that engagement:

really kept me going through the rest of everything else that I was doing.

It was good just being able to be part of that community, makes it nice

to be in Uni. So, we're always looking forward to the trips and just the actual work involved.

Shaz concurred that the curriculum elements of her course kept her engaged: "The outdoor ed side I loved." Jack suggested the level of challenge and enjoyment he experienced in the first-year curriculum was an essential enabler of his engagement and professional identity development: "I found the outdoor subjects compared to my other subjects, the outdoor thing is pretty easy. And I think that's just because I enjoyed doing it more. Yeah. I found it easier." Renee commented on the breadth of the curriculum in the first year and its role in her enjoyment: "The variety of activities we are doing was really interesting, kept you switched on, it's not just bush walking the whole time, I think the whole course was interesting."

Many of the participant responses throughout the research focussed on elements of enjoyment they experienced within the course curriculum that stimulated their knowledge and skill development. These responses suggested potential epistemological perspectives on how the participants acquired knowledge and skills throughout their degrees. The resultant data related to this concept highlighted specific elements within the curriculum that participants felt either inhibited or enabled their professional identity development.

Given that the participants' courses contained substantial field-based learning, the researcher expected to find a substantial amount of data related to the benefit of fieldwork and practical experience outside of the classroom. This data was the most noticeable within the course curriculum enablers and inhibitors theme, with 93 individual data points directly referencing the benefit of field-based and practical learning. Many participants referenced the idea that they would learn more while engaged in practical fieldwork. Beth stated that "being out in the field, that's where I'm

going to learn the most," and Ange added, "we focused on the field labs as students; we focus on them because that's where we learn the most and that's where we really feel like we know where we're going." Aaron expanded on this experience and aspect of development:

> I just enjoyed getting outside rather than being in the classroom. You can only learn so much in the classroom, but actually doing it through trial and error, to be able to actually know what works and what doesn't work.

The experiential nature of practical learning in the field supported the concept of learning outside the classroom. Aaron argued for "just participating in activities. It's the best way to learn, just learning by doing." James reinforced this perspective: "for me personally all my learning is through the activities and you really can put it into practice." Beth indicated in her response that:

> I've seen how practical based it is and that's really important to me as I don't want to do lots of theory, I think there's a lot more that you learn by experience than by reading it out of the textbook.

Beth's response demonstrates that, from her perspective, the practical nature of the course curriculum enabled the development of her professional identity. Amanda's concurred: "I wasn't sitting watching a lecture. The outdoor rec stuff was way more interesting because it was hands-on, and I was doing something and learning at the same time." Aaron also supported this perspective and indicated his preference for field-based learning: "there is still value from the classroom stuff but, most of the stuff I got more value out of, is actually out in the field." Aaron's comment acknowledged that theoretical classroom teaching still provided benefit to his development.

Although data related to the benefit of learning in the field predominated, 17 participants also acknowledged that classroom and theoretical teaching components were also crucial to professional development. Beth recommended the concept that "competence and knowledge can come from the physical and mental work of actually sitting down and learning things." This concept received further development by Ange: "I'll also get the most learning out of the theory as well, I still think that the classroom time is important because we have to learn the theory and you can't learn all of that out in the field." Notably, three participants admitted that they had come to appreciate the theoretical components of the course throughout their study. Ange responded that "I'm also looking forward to the theory part, which I didn't think I would, but since we've started, I don't mind the theory, I find it quite interesting." Carl agreed with Ange:

> I actually like the readings now. I've realised that if you actually read it it's interesting, and then you can relate it to some of the stuff we do, and you can relate basically everything we learn in the reading to the stuff that the lecturer or someone would say when we're out in the field, or even in class the next week. It makes it easier to understand what they're going on about when you've done the readings.

Rosa further supported the concept of her overall development through commentary on her classroom-based teaching experiences: "I didn't know it was going to be so, theory-based. Because I was going into [outdoor] rec, I didn't anticipate so many learning concepts, which is good, though; I think it's good to do all that." Within this theme, Nat identified that theoretical teaching linked synergistically with field-based teaching: "in Outdoor Ed it all links together and you actually remember it better, and it makes more sense." Paula reinforced Nat's comment, explaining that "Learning in the classroom I think only enhances the practical outdoor stuff I do see the connection;

I think that the learning before applying is important, I think a lot of what you learn is through application though."

Comments regarding the practical-based learning within the participants' courses often referred to the concepts of 'Hard Skills' and 'Soft Skills'. These references linked to the learning outcomes the participants felt they gained through their theoretical and practical experiences. Seven participants made specific comments directly using the term 'soft skills'. Beth suggested that "there were a lot of soft skills" in her learning, and Ange indicated that "I certainly didn't expect the softer skills to be such a strong component of what I would learn, I've actually developed my soft skills a lot." Five participants further clarified their understanding of the soft skills they were learning through the curriculum by identifying specific soft skills. Rosa highlighted the concept of "reading people" and "empathy," James indicated "situational leadership," Beth proposed "connecting with people," and Carl emphasised "mental toughness."

Data identified the opposing concept of 'Hard Skill' development, and hard skills were mentioned by five participants (Interview 3) as an enabler within the curriculum that helped support their professional identity development. Jack stressed that he had developed "a lot of hard skills around adventure activities," and Beth supported this comment, adding that "my hard skills definitely improved over the whole course." Other participants identified activities that developed their hard skills throughout their study. Aaron listed "bushwalking…canoe guiding…skiing, mountain biking and first aid," Carl added "navigation skills," and Jack further added "rock climbing and general adventure activities." The identification of practical activities as enablers of hard skills and, thereby, professional identity development dovetails with the earlier results identifying

the benefit of fieldwork and practical experience. Many of these activities are components of fieldwork and practical experiences.

Inside the data encompassing general curriculum concepts and knowledge and skill development, specific individual comments did not fit into any of the more frequently coded designations. The researcher, however, identified these comments as essential data elements requiring analysis and representation within the research results.

Beth acknowledged some holistic benefits of learning outdoors related to her professional identity development. She recounted that her learning experiences within the course had helped her to understand that her knowledge had:

broadened, in the sense that originally it was, like, the leaders are, they're important in a lot of different ways, to help develop skills and knowledge and that sort of thing. But now it has expanded even further into-- it's not just important to be a leader to that one group; you need to be a leader to the community at large as well.

Beth expanded on this sense of community responsibility:

because the outdoors is-- as I said before, it's such a catalyst for this style of learning, I guess. Community is really important for, us as humans to feel connected to each other and to feel part of something, and it can help build confidence in who they are as an individual.

Beth also suggested the curriculum had helped her to "know who you are, and know what your beliefs are and what your values are".

James's response from interview 3 used larger societal concepts to explain the curriculum's learning opportunities and how they enabled the development of his professional identity. He explained that:

people are realising that-- finally that the Earth is not in its healthiest state. Um, and when you talk to them about how you get to take kids outdoors and stuff, they think it's a great idea because you're growing up this new generation of kids that, hopefully, will have some sort of love for the outdoors, and then they'll have some sort of passion towards keeping it alive. So, in retrospect, I've had a lot of good feedback from people based on what I have learned.

Nine of the participants identified a broad curriculum idea built on the previous societal concepts: that there is a link between the professional notion of industry employment taking place in the outdoors and the need for university teaching to take place outdoors. Stella indicated, "I think it's really important considering it is outdoor education, you're getting out in the field and yeah, really putting into practice what you've learned in the classroom." Ange added that her comfort in the profession "has come from, uh, actually being outdoors, actually being in the experience and having the physical experience of, um, different, uh, things that could happen in the outdoors."

The results section concerning general curriculum-based enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development has identified many different concepts and ideas as reported by the participants during the interview process. Identifying broader holistic curriculum concepts and their impact on professional identity development starts to consider the influence of family, friends and other social perceptions and their impact on the individual's development.

Theme 4 – Family, Friends, Social Perceptions, and their Impacts

The thematic analysis of the interview responses identified a prominent theme relating to family, friends, and general social perceptions and their impacts on the

participants' professional identity development. This theme was broad in scope, ranging from close intimate and personal interactions with family to the industry-wide impact of distanced and externalised social perceptions. However, the theme was well defined, suggesting that these interactions played an essential part in the participants' professional identity development. The results for this theme will be presented, beginning with broader social and public perceptions and impacts, then focusing on the impacts generated through the participant's friends, and then narrowing the focus to the effects of the immediate family.

Public Perception

Throughout their courses, the participants were exposed to various perceptions concerning their choice of course or career choice in the outdoors. Within the semi-structured interviews, participants could discuss the broader social perceptions they experienced and the impacts of this exposure on developing their professional identity.

The participants provided some positive responses about their career or course choices. Jim identified a perspective that some people thought it was "good that I'm having this opportunity to go to lots of different places and travel a lot, it's like a privilege in a way." Aaron added to this sentiment: "people are starting to become more aware of the positive things that outdoor education is trying to bring to society." James provided a more detailed response:

I've had a lot of good feedback from people; people are realising that--finally, you know, that the Earth is not in its healthiest state. When you talk to them about how you get to take kids outdoors, they think it's a great idea, because you're, growing up this new generation of kids that

hopefully will have some sort of love for the outdoors, and then they'll have some sort of passion towards keeping it alive.

While participants acknowledged that they had experienced some positive general sentiments regarding their course choice, they also noted that the nature of the response depended on whom they were talking to. Carl summed up his feelings: "if it's someone new, I usually would just say, 'I'm an outdoor ed teacher,' compared to an outdoor leader; I usually use the teacher term, because it's easier for them to understand, and they kind of get it." Aaron provided a more detailed response:

I suppose it depends on who you're talking to. If you're talking to someone who understands what a professional is and has [an] idea of what a professional is, someone who is a teacher, or even if it is a different teaching field, or has a certain amount of education, I suppose you can draw comparisons and be able to have a constructive conversation with them about exactly what's happening. But then there's also people that are quite uneducated, quite opinionated, and kind of neglectful of any other opinion; they kind of stick to their own opinion, and it can be frustrating to sort of talk to them.

Although the participants conveyed some positive comments, and some indicated that it depended on whom they were talking to, their overwhelming response was that the public perception of their course of study and career choice was negative and devalued their professional identity. Across the three semi-structured interviews, participants repeatedly expressed a feeling of having their professional identity devalued through interactions with the public (ten participants in interview 1, seven in interview 2, and eight in interview 3).

Ange indicated that she had been asked, "Don't you just go on camps?" John had people indicate that his chosen course is "just a bludge because all you do is wander around outside." Jack revealed that he felt devalued when he was told of his choice of course and profession "you're never at uni, it's so easy, you will never go anywhere." Renee repeated feedback she had received concerning her being in the field a lot with the university: "'All you do is go on camps', and they're just, like wondering what that's got to do with being at Uni to do that, whereas you can do that in your own time, kind of thing." Shaz indicated, "Just the fact that people do not think you're really learning anything, they think you're just going and having some fun rather than really learning." Renee explained that "I know that people don't think outdoor ed is important because it's got this image of just out having fun, they think that having fun is not helping you learn." James reported that people often thought his course was "a bit of a holiday and not really school," and Jack noted that he also experienced similar feedback, with people commenting, "That's not work; you're going and having fun all the time." These student responses reinforced the importance of the theme that public perception can affect the participants' professional identity development.

Fun

The common use of the word 'fun' to describe the participants' choice of course or career appeared regularly in the interview responses. The participants also referred to the 'fun' their choice of course and career entailed. These 'fun' references in the data were positive and negative in context.

The negative references regularly devalued the importance of 'fun' as a pedagogical tool. Renee proposed that she encountered the external perspective: "they think that having fun is not helping you learn." Shaz also commented that

"people, you know, they don't think you're really learning anything, they think you're just going and having some fun rather than really learning how to do a new activity." Ange summed up the sentiments of a number of the participants:

> My friends that have done science at Melbourne Uni, very academic people, they just, like, laugh and just go, 'Oh, that looks like a lot of fun.' I'm like, well, it is a lot of fun, but that's not the whole point of it, and it kind of belittles it.

> Jack confirmed the concept of being belittled proposed by Ange, noting that he is often told about his studies: "That's not work; you're just-- you're going and having fun all the time."

> On the other hand, nine study participants used the concept of 'fun' to positively describe their course and profession choice. Carl specified, "just by having fun and just being out there, you've got personal development happening." Ange supported Carl's idea: "It's just really good fun at the same time, but that's probably because we've chosen the right path to go down, because it can actually be fun too, it's professional." Later, she added that, "going bushwalking is really fun and going rafting's really fun, that's sort of just part of the equation." Stella confirmed that she often used fun to explain and justify her choice of profession: "Because it's fun, it's exciting, and it's a good way for people to learn." The student responses above highlight the relevance of 'fun' as a thematic element in the collected data that warrants further investigation.

Explaining Outdoor Ed/Leadership to Friends

During Interviews 1 and 2, participants were asked to describe how they explained their choice of course and associated profession to friends. The study

participants' responses to this question were diverse and responded to the situational context when communicating their explanations to their friends. During interview 1, Carl used his prior outdoor education experiences to explain to his friends, "I have done a similar course to get a job like our year 12 outdoor ed teacher." This concept was echoed by Jim, who used the concept of school-based outdoor education because it was familiar to his friends:

> he did Outdoor Ed in high school so it was easy, he went sea kayaking and there were two leaders with him, teachers and he knew they needed to be there. So, he knew that's what I'd be doing, it would be someone in that environment professionally, you know keeping people safe. So, I guess that's the way I'd explain it too. I'd say someone needs to facilitate or run these activities and I've got to be the person that knows how to do it in the right way.

Sam utilised the environmental aspect of her studies to explain to her friends what she was doing at university: "I would explain not only the activities we're doing but the environmental aspect of it, like how we try to minimise our impact, as well as the teaching side of things." Six participants (interviews 1 and 2) identified that they often had to explain that they were not studying PE. Carl recounted that he would often have to say, "It's not PE teaching," and Aaron explained that he often "gets pigeonholed as studying PE" when describing his studies to friends. Jack captured other participants' sentiments by stating that "nobody knows what Outdoor Ed is, and they go, 'Oh, PE'."

Participants often used the practical nature of their studies as a reference point to help their friends understand what they do at university. Stella would say, "go on camps." Nat would say, "I am teaching them to live out in the bush." Sam said,

"activities like mountain biking, rock climbing and abseiling." Some participants used the outcomes they could provide to others to communicate purpose. For example, Sam explained that:

> I want to take out troubled youth into the field and teach them the basic life skills that we don't get to learn. You know, them listening to their family and being able to stand on their own. That's how I explain what I'm working towards.

In the same vein, Jim said he would discuss "the knowledge that you need to have to do that job, whether it's rock climbing or paddling, that involves safety, and you need first aid." Renee used the personal development outcomes she received through her study to add meaning when explaining to her friends: "I have told a lot of my friends why I'm so passionate about the outdoor ed stuff, and they are starting to get it. Like I say, look at how confident I feel." Rosa used a pedagogical description to relate to her friends, telling them, "we use the outdoors as a classroom." However, she acknowledged that "still people don't get it; 'You're still going on camps'" was a response she would often receive from her friends. Carl explained, even towards the end of his studies, his friends did not understand what he was doing at university:

> last week I came back going, 'I'm so stressed; I've just spent a week on camp and now I've got all these assignments to do and this and that.' 'Oh, you went away for a week.' I still get that after three years. I'm like, 'I didn't go away; I was actually doing uni work on camp, if that makes sense.' I'm like, 'This is all part of my degree; I'm not having a--' like, don't get me wrong, it was fun, but, um, you know, we're doing-- we're covering content and there's learning taking place. It's not, it's not going out and

getting pissed with your mates for a week; like, that's, I guess, what they

still see it as.

A diverse range of responses from the participants concerning how they described their course to their friends was evidenced in the data. A recurrent concept describing the difficulty in explaining their course to friends and having them understand and value their choice was evident in the participants' responses. This recurrent concept reinforced the inhibitory effect of these interactions on professional identity development.

Explaining Outdoor Ed/Leadership to Family

The responses for this theme shared a similar pattern to those in the previous section, whereby participants' explanations of what they were studying to their families were wide-ranging and broad. In interview 1, ten participants highlighted that they had previous camping-based experiences with their family before commencing their course. Ange said, "I have done a bunch with my family," Beth replied, "from the beginning, I started camping with my family," Jack highlighted that "Mum and Dad always took me camping," and Rosa detailed that "we went down to camp every summer, went camping to the beach." When families had histories of outdoor experiences with their children, the participants found it easier to explain their studies and work to their families. As Stella explained, "My family has got a big background in Outdoor Ed and outdoor stuff, so they pretty much understand what I do."

The participant's capacity to describe their course and future employment to their families was evident through the concept of activity skill acquisition. This skill acquisition concept was well represented in the data responses to the question regarding the study participants' explanations to families. Eleven study participants

used this concept to explain their study choice to their families. Rosa explained that she would say, "I went on trips to learn skills and then how to teach other people those skills." Shaz added that she would say, "we have to learn the skills ourselves but it's also that we look at the leaders who are taking the trip, we look at what they're doing and we think about whether we would do things the same way that they are." Jim confirmed that he also used the activity skill acquisition concept in his explanations, referring to: "the knowledge that you need to have to do that job" and referencing activities included in his course such as "rock climbing or paddling" which "involve safety" and "first aid".

Some participants noted that they focussed their descriptions on the outcomes that employment in their industry would allow them to provide. Sam indicated, "I'll say, you know, I want to take out troubled youth into the field and teach them the basic life skills that we don't get to learn." James' response indicated that he would say, "when we finish, we can take people out safely into the outdoors and get them to have some sort of growth and development." Renee continued this theme with her answer, "you know, it's good for personal development and social development with the group and life skills and team-building."

Another concept prominent in the data within this theme describing study and career choice to family was the relationship between their course and potential employment in school-based education roles. Paula would say, "It's education, I'm becoming a teacher." Jack would also make this link to teaching: "I just usually say I'm doing teaching, but I am specialising in Outdoor Ed." Rosa would respond in the same way: "it's like school teaching but in the outdoors." Jim summed up this view of linking their course and employment options with school-based education: "I always relate it back to school camps and I just say, well you know how you take kids out on school

camps; there are people that are professional that can do that stuff. That's how I explain it because it's easy to understand."

Throughout the interviews, participants noted that the support from their families regarding their course choice and future employment ranged from positive support to a lack of support. In interview 1, Amanda discussed the lack of support she received from her parents by stating, "They're confused, because my dad always says, "Well, what are you going to get out of that?" In interview 3, Amanda continued this concept of a lack of parental support by indicating "they think it's a stupid job, my dad always goes, 'What are you doing?, you just go away all the time.', he doesn't really see it as job type thing." Nat communicated that she believed her lack of support from her parents was due to "a cultural background thing, and when someone asks my dad what's your daughter doing, he'll be like 'yeah she's doing teaching', but he won't really elaborate on it, they are not too happy with it." Paula did not think that her family would be quite so supportive if her course was "just the outdoor ed course" and she noted that she had to enrol in a PE/Oed course for parental support. Although some participants identified these negative sentiments, many others indicated that they had received support from their parents regarding their choice of course and future employment options.

Across interviews 1 to 3, 14 participants noted that they had received positive sentiments from their families about their course and career choice. These sentiments generally focussed on the understanding provided by parents and the fact that their children were doing something they loved. For example, Ange noted that, "my family when I switched degrees, everybody said to me it was much better suited towards who they know I am, and so, they think that it's great," and Beth explained:

They love it, they know it suits me really well they're happy that I'm…,

my mom actually finds it hilarious, because she was studying outdoor

recreation when she finished school, and my big brother has as well, so

we all sort of followed in the same footsteps.

Carl also recognised that his parents acknowledged the personal benefits of his

chosen direction:

Mum and Dad both think it's really good, both for my personal life as well

as professional, they think it's going to give me a lot of positive personal

attributes, just by doing the course, even if I don't go into outdoor ed

afterwards. They think it will be handy for when I go overseas and in the

future for when I go … like it's a good backup from just teaching. It's like

a good backup for me.

Several other participants noted that their families supported their choice. For

example, James said, "they trust my judgment, they know that I like…, that I'll choose

what I want to do and yeah, they're one hundred percent behind me." Jack explained,

"My parents are happy now that I've found something that I'm really enjoying." Stella's

summed up her family's sentiments: "Oh, they love it, they are really supportive."

Because this study contends that the nature and degree of familial support is

critical to professional identity formation, the support or lack of support from family was

essential to identify in the data. While the next theme continues to explore the data

concerning relationships for the participants, it will focus on participants' relationships

within their course, specifically with their peers and the staff, and on the importance of

role modelling to the development of professional identity.

Theme 5 – Effects of Peer Relationships and Role Modelling

The data presented a series of linked responses from the participants regarding the relationships they experienced during their course. These were primarily peer relationships or student-to-staff relationships. Because of the amount of time students and staff spend together learning in the field, the researcher anticipated a range of responses in the data referencing these types of relationships and their impact on professional identity development throughout the course.

Relationships with Peers

Many participants highlighted the importance of friendships they were looking forward to developing from the beginning of their degree and that they developed during their degree. John alluded to this concept when he stated, "I'm excited to spend time with new people and form some strong relationships and get some good connections hopefully out of that." Ange explained, "well a lot of my friends, my close friends now are from my course." Beth remembered one of her early field-based learning experiences: "it was where everyone sort of came together, and you realised that you get to spend three years with this amazing group of people." Renee solidified the concept of the impact of peer relationships on her learning experience: "the outdoor group is the main group of friends I've got from Uni, so it's easy to come into a class with everyone who is fairly like-minded, then that helps you within your learning and development as well." Beth also highlighted the importance of peer relationships in the learning experience:

> But I, I guess I didn't realise how close I would come with my, outdoor community, with, my class. I knew the outdoors would be a great catalyst
> for relationship building, but I didn't realise the extent of it until--

especially when I first started and I was like, 'Yeah, these are really cool

people, but I guess we'll only hang out in class,' to the end of our last

trip, everyone in tears, like, not being able to see each other again.

Beth expanded this realisation about the importance of her peer relationships on her development and the facilitating role that the staff played:

by allowing us freedom to build those relationships and letting us explore

different relationships. Just putting us in the same place for a long period

of time, and freedom within the lectures as well, it was also quite relaxed,

and everyone was chatty which provided a strong base for our

development over our course.

Amanda described how her relationships over the course helped her to develop personally: "I hardly knew anyone at the start and I'm really shy but by the end like I totally came out of my shell." Rosa added that:

It's the sense of community,-- being around people all the time, and what

that means and how to go about it. -- I don't know if it's something you

specifically taught, but you kind of -- not forced us to, but put us in a

situation where we had to deal with lots of different people.

Aaron indicated that his peer relationships paved the way for a solid professional network and that he enjoyed "networking and speaking to my classmates that will be in my profession, and build the networks here at uni."

The breadth of the student comments regarding the importance of peer relationships for supporting their professional identity development was evident in the data. The extensive references to peer relationships in participant responses warrant further exploration of their importance to the development of professional identity. This exploration will be undertaken in the following discussion chapter.

Relationships with Staff/Role Modelling

The importance of relationships with peers was evident in the data presented in the last section. The participants also spent considerable time with staff throughout their degrees. Many of the participants acknowledged the benefits of this extended time. Shaz noted that "there's a lot of difference with the outdoor ed staff and students, compared to other tutors and lecturers, we learn heaps more with the outdoor staff." James and John felt that they learned a lot from the role-modelling provided by the staff. James said, "Going out on field trips with you guys, you pick up things that you've got to be doing all the time. Then I guess we just try and learn or copy." John added that he learned much by "watching how you (researcher) and the other lecturers go about things." Stella explained she learned much of her knowledge and skill from "looking at the leaders that I have had" during her degree. Carl agreed: "I picked up a lot from the knowledgeable lecturers when you are just walking along in the field."

Some participants communicated specific traits they observed among staff who acted as role models. Jack identified that it was important to be able to joke around but still be professional at the same time: "Sort of like the way Evan does it; he's always joking around, but he knows his stuff." Rosa referred to one of her lecturers who impacted her during her studies: "I think she's got that balance, she can talk to the students, she builds good rapport with students - but then she's also the leader at the same time. They respect her as a leader but then will interact with her as well." Renee believed that working with the university staff made her act professionally because of the links to networks she may have to use in the future:

> obviously you are going to act professionally because you want the best
>
> impression you can for people like her. As well as you guys, you've got

networks, and if I put you down as a reference and I've looked like an absolute clown in class, then obviously you're not going to give my name to anyone else so.

Relationships with staff and seeing staff as role models were definite features in the participant responses across interviews 1, 2 and 3. The benefit of these relationships was evident in the data presented above, and their impact was a recurring feature in the participant responses regarding their professional identity development.

The data presented in this chapter highlights a broad and diverse set of concepts and perspectives as communicated by the participants in the study. The following discussion chapter will consider these concepts and perspectives by synthesising the results data and locating the discussion within current academic literature to address this study's research aims. This discussion will employ a symbolic interactionist framework to guide the discussion. This framework contends that research participants act toward things based on the meanings they have for them, that these meanings are derived through the participants' social interactions, and that participants transform these meanings through interpretative processes to make sense of their social worlds (Snow, 2001).

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter presented the results of the qualitative data and demographic descriptive quantitative data collected during this research project and detailed the themes that were identified through the data analysis. This chapter progresses the study to formulate interpretations of the data and consider the intersections between the resultant themes, relevant literature and the research aims.

Understanding who are Outdoor Leadership Students

This section of the discussion will highlight factors related to student characteristics prominent in the data. These characteristics will have some demonstrable impact on developing a strong or matured professional identity throughout an outdoor leadership degree.

Family and Friends' Connections to Positive Engagement With the Outdoors

Family and friends play a large part in developing a connection to positive outdoor engagement (Louv, 2013), and their influences can translate into a desire to work in the outdoor industry. Student backgrounds that involve family or friends who interact with the outdoors and engage in meaningful shared outdoor experiences can shape the formation of a professional identity long before a student commences studying for an outdoor leadership degree. Beth indicated, "from the beginning, I started camping with my family. I've had lots of really nice memories of sitting in remote areas like Wilson's prom and being really in touch with where I am; that's something

that really hits home for me from the instructional point of view." Research reinforces the idea that identity is multifaceted, with multiple identities being defined at different levels of abstraction (Bjerregaard, 2014) and that identity is, therefore, constantly reshaped and redefined based on an individual's experiences. Serpe and Stryker (2011) highlighted how a symbolic interactionist perspective outlines that identity definitions and interpretations change continuously in immediate interactive situations. Therefore, growing up, having outdoor experiences with family and friends will shape an individual's identity and how they relate to being in the outdoors.

These Experiences are Not Needed to Develop a Strong Professional Identity

As previously highlighted, outdoor experiences involving family and friends before commencing an outdoor leadership degree can support professional identity development. However, the data indicated that these early childhood experiences are not crucial to developing a robust professional identity while studying for a university degree in outdoor leadership. Nevertheless, these foundational experiences can support a more immediate understanding of a refined relationship with the outdoors (Rice & Torquati, 2013), thereby speeding up the development of a strong professional identity. It should be noted, however, that students who had numerous opportunities to engage with family and friends in the outdoors before commencing their course, and those who did not have multiple previous outdoor experiences, may still experience similar professional identity development challenges. It was, however, observed that a range of pre-university experiences might strengthen a student's capacity to address these challenges. This observation is consistent with observations by Pomfret and Varley (2019) that family-based outdoor experiences produced many positive developmental outcomes for all participating members.

Positive Support from Family and Friends Helps Develop a Positive Professional Identity

The data collected extended on the previous theme surrounding family and friends by indicating that the students' support from their family and friends was an essential part of validating their selection of course and choice of graduate profession (Khan et al., 2013). The resultant data demonstrated no direct link between an extensive background of outdoor experiences and the full support of family and friends to the student's development of a strong professional identity. However, the students acknowledge fewer barriers to development if this support is available. This deduction occurred in the commentary that Carl presented, acknowledging that he still felt supported by his family in the choice of his course and profession, even though he and his family had little outdoor experience before commencing his degree. Carl reported, "Mom and dad both think it's really good [course choice], both for my professional and personal life." However, it was identified that if the influence of family and friends is positive, the student is more likely to feel supported and validated in their choice despite broader society's overwhelming lack of support and negative perceptions (Ruiz Alvarado, Stewart-Ambo, & Hurtado, 2020). Khalid and Husnin (2019) more closely located this support and validation to the research context by indicating that family support significantly contributed to developing novice teachers' professional identity. Nine of this study's participants acknowledged that validation from family and friends supported the development of their professional identity if their family and friends had an understanding of the outdoor industry or prior exposure to the types of activities the student would engage with during their degree. Renee acknowledged this concept in interview 1, stating that her family were "pretty

supportive because we all have grown up camping and everything like that," and Stella agreed with this sentiment: "My family has got a sort of big background in outdoor ed and outdoor stuff, so they pretty much understand."

Nevertheless, students who do not receive support from their family and friends can still go on to develop strong professional identities through other internal and external support mechanisms such as teaching staff, peers, and the internet. Amanda epitomised this trajectory. She did not feel supported by her family throughout her degree and recounted that "they probably think it's a stupid job. My dad always goes, 'What are you doing? Like, you just go away all the time.' He doesn't really see it as job type thing." Nevertheless, in interview 3, Amanda communicated progression in the development of her professional identity: "if it's something to do with my degree, that's something that I am knowledgeable or have experience or, I'm confident in what I'm doing, then yes, I would say I am a professional." These student responses suggest that external validation from family and friends is not essential for developing professional identity but that students who are supported by family and friends face fewer barriers to developing their professional identity while engaged in study.

Struggle with the Concept of Professional Identity

The concept of professional identity required careful structuring in the research method. The researcher did this structuring purposefully because the initial baseline descriptive demographic information data highlighted that the concept of professional identity was unfamiliar or not easily understood by the study participants. Stull and Blue (2016) highlighted that professional identity does not develop linearly and that its development may ebb and flow as the student has experiences and their identity is challenged. Consequently, in interviews 1 and 2, the term 'professional identity' was

not used to avoid confusing the participants or introducing a concept with which they were not familiar. The procedure to investigate the participants' understanding of professional identity involved asking them how their family and friends would describe them professionally. Presenting the question this way encouraged the students to think about the qualities they believed they projected externally and to indicate what parts of their identity they believed other people observed aligned with the individual participant's idea of a professional. Garza et al. (2021) supported this approach to initial questioning of concepts related to professional identity. They acknowledged that professional identity development is a complex concept involving how others perceive an individual and how they perceive themselves.

Eight participants described themselves as professional during the interview process, and, at the end of their studies, only one participant indicated that they did not see themselves as a professional. The participants who indicated they were professional used notions to validate their professional identities, such as level of knowledge, experience, the feeling of capability, passion for the role, and confidence. These concepts are prominent in the literature, with Ewertsson et al. (2017) identifying embodied knowledge, Rus et al. (2013) suggesting work experience, and Fitzmaurice (2011) supporting capacity, passion and confidence as important elements for individuals in coming to understand their own professional identity. Results indicated that the participants used these central concepts identified within the professional identity literature. However, the concept of professional identity was unfamiliar to them in the earlier rounds of the interviews. In the third round of interviews, concepts of professional identity were introduced to participants in the question, 'do you see yourself as a professional?'. Even in interview 3, Sam, Stella, and Tim could not explain the concept of their professional identity, and when asked about it, they all

responded, "I don't know." The concept of identity is still a topic that remains unresolved in current literature. Therefore, it could be proposed that these participants remain challenged in formulating a deeper understanding of their professional identity.

The debate surrounding being a professional has occurred in Australia's outdoor industry for a considerable time. Hence, it is understood that students studying to be professionals in the outdoor industry may struggle with the concept because the overall industry provides them with conflicting signals and information. Mann (2002) highlighted this professionalisation conflict when she outlined the connections, disconnections, and intersections within the Australian Outdoor Industry as it negotiates a path towards professional status. Sixteen years later, in 2018, the Outdoors Victoria conference theme was 'your future in the outdoors' (Knight, 2018), with numerous conference presenters still debating and discussing the movement toward professional status for the outdoor industry. With respect to Mann's original article, the conference debates still centred on many of the same connections, disconnections, and intersections highlighted. This ongoing debate surrounding the industry's professionalisation can only challenge the development of professional identity for emerging outdoor leaders. Glucina et al. (2020) and Vermeulen et al. (2021) agreed that as an industry moves towards professionalisation, its members' professional identity can be tested by an ongoing questioning of the validity of their role within professional structures. For students studying to be outdoor professionals, explaining what they are studying at university and where this will take them for a career is an integral part of validating their choice of profession and strengthening their professional identity.

Explaining Choices is Essential for Validation and Professional Identity Development

The ability for students to explain what they study at university or the types of career paths their degrees will lead to requires a supportive structure for establishing a strong professional identity. Trinidad et al. (2021) indicated that a student's education environment provides a framework that contributes to forming their identities. Students' capacity to adequately explain degree and career choices requires identifying their own beliefs about these choices. It also requires understanding how their social relationships will perceive their choices and a strength of conviction that enables them to navigate and counter any objections to their personal beliefs. Throughout the interviews, participant responses indicated that they often found it difficult to adequately explain their choice of course and future profession to others. They indicated that this happened more frequently at the start of their course but became less frequent as they progressed. This type of understanding of how to explain their course and professional choices develops for students throughout their degree through processes of normative socialisation (i.e. when the students' positions change to match those around them) and through informational influences (i.e. when students' positions change as their knowledge develops) (Trinidad et al., 2021). As Biesta (2020) indicated, subjectification also supports the development of this understanding by allowing the student to assert their autonomy in their capacity to develop independent thought.

Rivera et al. (2021) aligned the notion of independent thought in this context with their concept of 'Self-Authorship', which they note is an important mechanism in professional identity formation. They describe self-authorship as the "internal capacity to define one's belief system, identity and relationships" (p.38). It was evident from the

study participants' responses that there were varying levels of self-authorship across the individuals. These varying levels of self-authorship were evident in the diverse responses generated due to the study participants' diverse backgrounds regarding their outdoor experience histories, educational opportunities, and familial and social circumstances.

Career-related aspirations often form during undergraduate study and are adopted through a complex array of social, individual, and environmental variables. Nehmeh and Kelly (2021) argued that the validation received by having other people positively acknowledge a choice of degree study and career was a critical external factor of positive identity formation. Juaneda et al. (2017) supported this concept by proposing that societal undervaluing of professions can negatively impact career choice.

When the study participants were asked about how they would describe what they were studying at university and their chosen career path to others, Dave chose to provide a simple explanation from interview 1: "I explain it in the simplest terms, just I want to be an instructor in the outdoors." This simplified explanation highlights the study participants' limitations in explaining the profession's depth and breadth and the roles that professionals serve. This limitation of knowledge at the commencement of a degree program can be understood for students due to their minimal level of professional understanding and paucity of experiences to build their professional identity. By the final interview, participants were using industry-based nomenclature such as "Outdoor experiential learning" (Rosa), "facilitating outdoor learning experiences" (Chris), and "helping others understand their relationship with nature" (Beth) in their explanations of their degree and career choice. This observed shift in nomenclature toward using industry-accepted terms and concepts demonstrates the

participants' longitudinal professional identity development, and the progression of their ability to provide robust explanations of their degree and career choice. The use of industry-based language and terms is acknowledged by Sutherland and Markauskaite, (2012) as an essential element in developing a professional voice to support professional identity development.

The concept of cultural heritage's impact on forming professional identity also appeared in the research. A growing international body of literature addresses the limited cultural diversity in the westernised concept of outdoor recreation (Bond Rogers et al., 2019; Lisahunter, 2021; Roberts, 2018; Williams, 2020; Winter et al., 2019). This limited cultural diversity also flows into the outdoor industry, and although there are efforts to address this limitation, the lack of diversity is apparent in the Australian outdoor industry (Davies et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Lisahunter, 2021). Observation of this limited cultural diversity was evident in the study participants through the descriptive demographic data collected. Lisahunter (2021) indicated that this homogeneous cultural makeup is representative of outdoor education/leadership offerings in higher education in Australia.

At the study's commencement, the sample group comprised 21 participants who identified as having white Anglo-Saxon heritage and one participant (Nat) who identified as having a non-white Anglo-Saxon heritage. Slay and Smith (2010) proposed that professional identity development cannot be considered holistically without considering the impacts of an individual's cultural background. In her interview responses, Nat identified that her cultural background affected her validation experience and professional identity development. When she was asked about how she explained her course and career choice to her parents, she responded as follows:

That's the hard thing, because my family doesn't really understand it. It goes into a cultural background thing. Like in my culture [Indian] everyone's doing maths and sciences and biology and then I come from left field and say I'm doing Outdoor Ed and no one really understands it. They just think I'm taking the easy way out and so there's a lot of unhappiness with my choice. When someone asks my dad what's your daughter doing, he'll be like "yeah she's doing teaching" but he won't really elaborate on it because he is not happy with it.

Nat's response highlights the apparent challenge that her non-Anglo-Saxon cultural background presented and its effect on the levels of validation she received from her family members.

Nat also highlighted a similar challenge regarding social friendships: "I'm not friends with anyone from the same cultural background. I make a point not to be friends with them. I don't want everyone to know what I'm doing because they don't understand and support me." These responses demonstrated the conflict that Nat had in seeking validation for her course choice and career from people with a non-Anglo-Saxon background that had little to no experience and understanding of the outdoor industry. As Nehmeh and Kelly (2021) specified, the support of family and friends provides an essential validation mechanism to assist in the formation of a professional identity. Slay and Smith (2010) asserted that the process of professional identity development within present-day careers might be different for members of groups from cultural backgrounds outside the standard. Where an individual experiences marginalisation due to their cultural background being deemed outside the norm, supportive validation structures, external to family and friends, are required to develop a strong professional identity.

Perceptions of Roles of Outdoor Leadership Professionals

This theme was considered in the four following sub-themes: practical experience is important to develop a professional identity; practical experience and theory-based knowledge are required to validate professional identity; broader society struggles with its understanding and validation of the outdoor industry and outdoor professionals; and links between experience and qualifications for validation of professional identity.

Practical Experience is Important to Develop a Professional Identity

Stella offered insight about the need for practical learning experiences to assist in developing professional identity: "I think it's really important considering it is outdoor education, that you're getting out in the field and, really putting into practice what you've learned in the classroom." This insight was often represented in the research, indicating that students have a developed understanding of the need for practical in-field learning to support their professional identity development.

Working as an outdoor leader could be constructively aligned with the teaching and healthcare professions due to the high level of vocational skill required to carry out work-related tasks (Marsden et al., 2012; Taylor & Flaherty, 2020). In university degrees designed for teacher or nurse education, practical components are critical to the overall development of a student's professional identity. If these courses did not have these components, students would not have the opportunity to operationalise their professional capabilities and find out if they could complete the tasks required in the workplace. These practical opportunities foster foundational identity development concepts as the students receive timely feedback about what works or does not work

and what is appropriate or not appropriate within the specific role and workplace. As Luyckx et al.(2011) suggested, one's identity is subject to change and transformation due to transactions with the environment. Steenekamp et al. (2018) recommended that learning during practical experiences allows students to further invest in an engaged ontological understanding of ways of being in the world. The data captured in this study reinforces that this ontological understanding develops through practical experiences based on workplace requirements. This development creates transactions that benefit the student's professional identity development.

The practical components of an outdoor leadership degree incorporate several specific elements that support students' professional identity development. The time spent engaged in field-based activity with university staff is an important opportunity for students to see outdoor professionals at work and align their developing practice with industry norms. Wong and Trollope-Kumar (2014) acknowledged this role-modelling capacity in their proposition that university teachers play a pivotal role in their students' understanding of what it means to be a professional within their chosen vocation. In one of his interviews, James communicated this concept in his own words: "Going out on field trips with you guys and other teachers; you pick up things that you've got to be doing all the time." He acknowledged the importance of engaging with staff in simulated workplace environments to understand professional expectations, which, in turn, assisted him with his professional identity development. This consistently reported study participant perspective on role-modelling aligns with Enns and Shapovalova (2015), who found that an essential psychological condition for developing professional identity is active communication with the staff during the learning process and practical training.

The relationship-building during the study participants' practical course components is another crucial element in developing their professional identity. The shared pedagogical experiences built into the curriculum involved students often spending extended periods (up to 14 days) engaged in field-based learning. These experiences require students to spend 24 hours a day in close confines with each other and with the teaching staff in what can be physically, emotionally, and mentally challenging environments while engaging in adventure-based activities. The benefits of these shared experiences are heavily documented in the relevant discipline-based literature (Davidson et al., 2004; J. J. Jones & Hinton, 2007; P. Martin & McCullagh, 2011; Priest & Gass, 2018). Through shared experiences and a range of reflective and reflexive processes, the students learn to process these benefits for themselves. These shared experiences assist students in further developing attributes of their professional practice as they also come to a better understanding of the elements of their professional identity. Aaron acknowledged the benefit these shared experiences had on his professional development: "it's definitely the challenging experiences that I've been able to persevere through. I've had lots of fun experiences that have bee, good memories while I've learnt a lot, but looking back, it's the challenges and shared experiences that I've had that I look at that I go, 'Okay, I've developed'." Aaron's statement is supported by Zhang and Parsons (2017), who noted that field experience shared with a similar cohort of students is a unique learning experience presenting distinctive challenges to and opportunities for growth and developing one's professional identity.

Zhang and Parsons (2017) further extended the concept of the uniqueness of the learning environment of shared practical experiences, highlighting that this learning experience provides a safe place for students to test their professional

identity. The testing uses an environment that can control the detrimental consequences associated with the professional setting while, at the same time, providing a level of reality that cannot be achieved in a classroom. The shared field teaching experiences the study participants experienced during their degree presented simulated workplace environments that allowed them to test attributes such as leadership, group management, decision-making, and judgement. The ability to test these attributes permitted the study participants to reflect on their experience and incorporate this understanding into their professional practice and, consequently, within their professional identity. The ability to receive direct and real feedback from applied effort surrounded by a group of students all going through the same experience is supported in the literature. Ewertsson et al. (2017) suggested that an opportunity to put knowledge and skills acquired in lectures into practice, where a transfer of knowledge is maximised in the security of a real-life but managed and supervised environment with peers, is favourable for student development. In interview 2, Ange summed up the need for shared practical learning experiences in her degree: "All the trips, I feel like I get a lot out of them in heaps of ways, because you develop relationships with people, and you also develop your understanding of what your job as an outdoor leader is going to be." The shared practical experiences within the study participants' courses were a vital pedagogical element. These experiences demonstrate a strong alignment between the needs addressed by the current literature and indicators from the outdoor industry regarding practice requirements needed to develop a solid professional identity.

Practical Experience and Theory-based Knowledge are Required to Validate Professional Identity

Working successfully as an outdoor leader has been inextricably linked with high levels of practical skill development (Priest & Gass, 2018, Martin et al., 2006, Phipps, 2017). Whittington (2018) found that degree programs offering students more field learning time to consolidate their practical skill development may produce better outcomes regarding skill development and career path preparation. As previously indicated, the development and training of outdoor leaders require considerable exposure to practical experiences and workplace simulations upon which to develop their professional identity (Martin et al., 2017; Phipps, 2017; Priest & Gass, 2018). However, understanding appropriate theory and knowledge is also seen as extremely important in developing the capacity of outdoor leaders (Marsden et al., 2012, Martin, 2008, Shooter et al., 2009). These practical developmental experiences have a higher level of success if the associated theoretical knowledge is delivered in conjunction with practical experience.

There is some debate in the literature about whether it is best to teach this theoretical content before, during, or after practical experiences (Li & Wong, 2018; Natarajan et al., 2021; Paynter-Armour, 2021). However, it is well established that achievement of higher-level outcomes occurs if both pedagogical approaches are utilised (Knight, 2012, 2015, 2019; Paynter-Armour, 2021). Knight (2012) indicated that there is often a perceived dichotomy between practice and theory, with theory judged by students as less relevant to practice when learning to teach or instruct. This dichotomy was not apparent among the study participants, with thirteen participants making specific responses regarding the need for theoretical and practical course content to ensure that they received adequate preparation for professional roles. Sam

highlighted the general sentiment: "the lectures are interesting, I'm learning what we have to apply, it's the base of it and then we go into the real setting and consolidate our learning." The study participants identified that they saw this need for a mix or balance of practical and theoretical content within their course curriculum to validate their professional identity. Aaron epitomised this need for practical consolidation:

> Definitely doing the field-based stuff, you can learn so much in the classroom, but actually doing it through trial and error, to be able to actually know what works and what doesn't work. There's value from the classroom stuff but, most of the stuff I got more value out of, is actually out in the field.

Aaron's statement represents a direct student reflection on the need to consolidate theoretical or 'classroom' learning by putting it into practice in the field. The relevance of the theory-practice link was prominent. The immediacy of the link was also crucial to the study participants to ensure that the necessary conceptual alignment could become apparent between the taught theory and practical experience.

The current threat in Australia surrounding decreasing university funding and the movement of universities towards increasing economic rationalist business practice (Doidge and Doyle, 2020; Ross, 2020) challenges the need for a mix of practical and theoretical content to assist students in developing their professional identity. Outdoor leadership courses are often perceived as expensive to deliver (Harrison & Erpelding, 2012) and often have in-field practical components with higher than average institutional staff-to-student ratios (Munge & Thomas, 2021). This perception often results in higher education institution administrators moving these courses through a constant downward cycle of de-skilling and reduction of practical field time. This downward cycle occurs despite the sentiment expressed by the study

participants, which Beth summed up: "I've seen how practically based it is and that's really important to me." The reduction of practical time in outdoor leadership courses inevitably will decrease the students' capacities to develop strong and mature professional identities.

Broader Society Struggles with its Understanding and Validation of the Outdoor Industry and Outdoor Professionals

Research in the outdoor domain has consistently detailed concerns regarding the broader professional acknowledgement of the field. Guthrie (2001) commented that the outdoor profession is not generally valued, recognised, or supported by the public. He further acknowledged that this could be partly due to the profession's infancy. Compared to related fields such as psychology or education, only a small body of literature exists on the profession. Martin (2000) added to this viewpoint by noting that public recognition via social standing needs consideration for the industry's professionalisation to be validated. Although the proposal of these concepts occurred approximately 20 years ago, the proposition surrounding the outdoor profession not being valued by society remains acknowledged in the literature. Potter and Dyment (2016) proposed that outdoor education is undervalued, that the complexities of outdoor education are easily disregarded by general society, and that it is rarely afforded equal status with the more scientifically based disciplines or sub-disciplines. Martin et al. (2017) indicated that broader society and people outside the field often see outdoor leadership as fun and rarely value it as a profession.

Furthermore, Polley (2021) highlighted that "without a clear scope of practice to define the specialised body of knowledge and a recognised process for admission to the profession, public recognition of Outdoor Education is highly problematic"

(p.366). These comments indicate a challenge in developing professional identity in university outdoor leadership students. Facing such a strong negative perception from society regarding the validity and value of their chosen course and career path means that students need to find numerous internal and external mechanisms to support their professional identity development.

A lack of professional validation was a strong theme in the resultant data presented by the study participants. Beth summed up this sentiment when referring to the continual comments she received from others on her choice of profession: "Oh, you're just going out to have fun and just going out and just having a great time." She expressed a concern in this regard: "I don't know that it's an idea that the outdoor profession will ever get away from." This continued feeling of devaluing their choice of course and profession makes it hard for a student to develop a strong professional identity. As previously indicated, this feeling of being devalued can be mitigated by the support of close family, friends, and course staff. This presented pattern of devaluing thoughts and negative developmental aspects in the student responses have also received attention in recent literature (Park et al., 2018; Pop & van Nieuwerburgh, 2019).

Perceptions that the profession is considered 'fun' by broader society challenge the general understanding of the concept of 'work'. Rapuano (2009) proposed that work and leisure perceptions exist at opposite ends of a spectrum. However, this binary thinking does not consider the commercialisation of leisure and how providing activities considered 'fun' can also be someone's 'work'. Employment in the outdoor industry often sees a cross-over between work and fun (Maurer & Curtner-Smith, 2019b). Lewis and Kimiecik (2018) contended that outdoor leaders deliberately decide to combine the separate spheres of leisure and work. Students who find work in the

outdoor profession start down their path because they enjoy spending time in nature or participating in many adventure-based activities within the outdoor industry. Participant Tim argued for these environment or activity specific foundational experiences as an entryway to a career path: "Well, I wanted to do outdoor teaching in high school because I've been interested in the environment and sustainability. I think there's no better way than making people aware, getting them out in the environment, so this course was the logical choice." For students attempting to develop their professional identity, conceptual societal struggles regarding the outdoor industry and the work of the outdoor professional create several challenges for students to overcome. Individuals attempting to find validation in their professional roles face a conundrum when their work is labelled as fun for both negative and positive reasons.

Links Between Experience and Qualifications for Validation of Professional Identity

The outdoor profession has a long history of industry-based qualifications requiring significant components of demonstrable skill acquisition through practical experience (Martin et al., 2006, 2017; Martin, 2008). The participants in this study collectively agreed that there must be a strong link between experience and qualifications to validate professional identity. For example, Ange noted, "I think that time and experience are key to being a professional, and I also think the qualification is a necessity in our society." However, it was revealed in the participants' comments that students who had exposure to staff with considerable experience and limited formal qualifications regarded them as just as professional as those with less experience but highly recognised industry-acknowledged qualifications. The study

participants expressed that, as emerging professionals, it was essential to have industry-acknowledged qualifications because of the limited opportunities to access formal, field-based experience outside of paid work. Participant comments reflected the perspective that the need for higher education qualifications would become less important as their career progressed (although it may limit employment opportunities). The participants noted that an individual will have gained considerable experience over their career and would be increasingly viewed as a professional by their peers based upon that experience. Ange strengthened this idea and added to her previous comment:

> I mean, you look at someone like Mark [staff]; he has had heaps of experience and probably does not have nearly as many qualifications, and yet, I'd trust him over many, many people to go and, you know, take me down a river.

Ange's comments align with the research of McBrayer et al. (2021), who found that university students' perceptions favoured practitioner experience versus academic experience for teaching staff when conducting activities based in a workplace setting.

The participants in this study expressed an additional key idea regarding the link between qualifications and experience for validating professional identity based on risk management and public perception. Beth proposed that:

> it's good to have the qualifications because then you've got the formal understanding of why you do things. Even if you've been doing it for a long time, you could have that intrinsic knowledge, but if you've studied it, then you have those qualifications, and it can stand up in court.

Considerable research into the outcomes of incidents in the outdoor industry (Brookes, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2011a, 2011b) has indicated that a mix of

qualifications and experience was essential in mitigating adverse outcomes. Further research also found that formal qualifications are an effective risk mitigation tool for providing led outdoor experiences (Dickson & Gray, 2012; Martin et al., 2017; Priest & Gass, 2018). A mix of experience and qualifications provides a much stronger impression of skills, ability, and the capacity to make informed decisions. The participants in this study indicated that they would feel more professional when they had a mix of qualifications and practical experience because this mix meant that they would present a better public persona, which would validate their professional identity.

Outdoor Leadership Students' Perspectives on Professional Identity

An important element in developing professional identity is the individual's capacity to describe or define a 'professional'. Where a person cannot construct this definition, it could be challenging to conceptualise or contextualise what a professional in the outdoor industry is or what attributes or skills they are required to demonstrate. In attempting to understand how the study participants' perceptions of the profession and professionals within the industry develop during their degree, it was important to consider their perspectives and descriptions of a professional.

Understanding what makes a 'good professional' instead of a 'bad professional' arises from experience, is socially located, and includes internalised models of professionalism (Gilardi & Lozza, 2009). The study participants, throughout their degrees, had numerous opportunities to reflect on their internalised models of a professional through specifically structured learning opportunities. As Archer (2003) indicated, reflection on internalised models of professionalism and 'good professionals' cannot be conducted through a monologue but requires dialogue with others for effective reflection.

The participants were asked to describe and define a professional. The context of the research design fostered pre-existing expectations regarding their responses, given their course progression and their social exposure to concepts surrounding professions and professionals. The central concepts the participants used to describe and define a professional involved experience, skill, expertise level, and the ability to work at a high standard; the conduct displayed while carrying out professional duties, and the requirement to attain a higher education degree for social acceptance. These concepts were apparent in and remained consistent across interviews 1 and 2.

The outdoor industry has regularly identified technical skill acquisition as a foundation of an individual's ability to undertake their role (Baker & O'Brien, 2020). This foundational acknowledgement has merit in the literature (Priest & Gass, 2005; Shooter et al., 2009), but it has recently been challenged (Baker & O'Brien, 2020; Hickman & Stokes, 2016). There is an increasingly prevalent recognition that there has been an over-emphasis on outdoor leadership capacity based on technical skills at the expense of the equally important but often marginalised intra- and inter-personal skills necessary for outdoor employment (Marsden et al., 2012). The study participants' responses acknowledged this shift in understanding. They often referred to elements in their descriptions of a 'professional' that were not technical skill-related and acknowledged other skill and knowledge development domains. These responses signal that, for the participants developing professional identity, they saw a holistic perspective that extended beyond the technical skills required to be a professional in their industry.

Several of the study participants' responses identified that a professional requires a level of higher education. While some participants believed there was a need for a university-based higher education degree to be identified as a professional,

others did not specifically indicate a 'university' degree. Instead, they referred to 'tertiary education', which could take the form of any post-secondary education. This response implies that the industry has not clarified the level of qualification required for an employee to be considered a professional. This lack of specific information could challenge the participants' developing professional identity. The lack of a benchmark students can refer to makes it difficult to conceptualise whether they are professionals within the industry. It subsequently challenges their development of a solid and robust professional identity.

Previous definitions of a profession presented by Cruess (2004) and the ACP relate directly to elements within the study participants' responses regarding their definition of a professional. However, these responses did not mention certain characteristics of existing definitions, such as altruism, morality, integrity, ethics, and the advancement of the public good. Although these concepts were discussed throughout their curriculum, study participants struggled to identify these elements within their conceptualisation of a professional. This struggle may be because of the existing confusion regarding the terms 'profession' and 'professional'.

As graduates from a degree program in outdoor leadership, it would be reasonable to assume that the study participants possessed a greater understanding of their professional identity at the end of their studies than when they began. Stull and Blue (2016) supported this assumed development by agreeing that identity development occurs through the individual's lived experience. Because identity is an iterative process of constantly changing and reshaping an individual's multiple identities, identity can only develop in a direction shaped by the environment. As the students move through their degree and experience developmental impact due to the

variety of activities in their learning environment, this lived experience can only serve to develop their professional identity.

The professional identity development that the study participants experience throughout their degree is something that becomes different for each individual and develops through their cumulative experiences. Märtsin (2019) argued that this constructivist view of identity development is highly individualised in nature, denies the pre-existence of identity (an essentialist view), and acknowledges that identity development occurs through collective discourses that individuals engage with as an element of their everyday social existence.

Main Role of an Outdoor Leader

During each interview round, the study participants were asked to identify the outdoor leader's or professional's main role. Their responses allowed the researcher to gather evidence throughout each participant's degree, shedding light on their knowledge and providing an understanding of the specific elements that each participant believed were required to fulfil the role of an outdoor leader. This data also highlighted attributes that the participants would need to internalise (develop within themselves) as part of their professional identity if they wanted to develop their paradigm of an outdoor leader and provide congruency between their perceived thoughts and externalised actions (Sardabi et al., 2018).

Risk and Safety

In interview 1, many of the participants' responses regarding the main role of an outdoor leader centred around safety and risk management concepts. Risk and safety concepts within outdoor leadership are prominent in much of the academic

literature (Boyes & O'Hare, 2003; Carden, 2021; B. Martin et al., 2009; Martínková & Parry, 2017; Sullivan, 2006). As the participants have grown up in a highly litigious society, it is easy to understand why risk and safety concepts are so prominent. These concepts appear central to the societal image of outdoor leadership partly because of the perception that many of the activities and experiences that are led or facilitated are high-risk (Brandão et al., 2018; Coco et al., 2021). Consequently, these concepts are also associated with the potential for injury and with legislative and regulatory requirements surrounding risk and safety that businesses require for sustainability (González Castro et al., 2021).

Aaron highlighted the critical importance of a focus on safety when he discussed the main role of an outdoor leader: "to get everyone home safe." Dave concurred that it is essential "to keep them safe from any hazards." Early in the degree process, this response and the conceptual understanding level were deemed reasonable. Society tends to perceive outdoor adventure sports as having a high level of risk (Brymer et al., 2020; Gilbertson & Ewert, 2015; Porsanger & Sandseter, 2021), and this perception is accurate for specific activities. However, previous research has outlined that many mainstream sports have much higher levels of risk and injury than the activities used in most led outdoor activities (Clacy et al., 2017). In this way, the risks and levels of safety have more to do with perception than reality.

This societal concept that many new students bring into their degree programs is a foundational building block of their professional identity. The students had exposure to various outdoor adventure activities and experiences throughout their degrees. Cumulatively, these experiences were programmed through the curriculum to allow the students to challenge their assumptions surrounding risk and safety in

outdoor leadership. The challenging of their assumptions and the reformulation of their perspectives may further develop their professional identity.

The practice of exposing students to experiences within the curriculum that took them outside their existing comfort zone, and providing them with 'safe' experiences that they would have previously thought as 'unsafe', facilitated mechanisms to challenge parts of their professional identity. Increasing our understanding of activity-specific skills and knowledge is a great way to develop better judgement and decision-making. For students, developing these capacities would also foster belief in their ability to manage situations (Drury et al., 2005), especially if the activities have a level of risk and require a heightened ability to control the experience to create a safe outcome. Renee identified this increase in her belief in her ability as one way in which she strengthened her professional identity:

> we had a severe weather incident on the High Plains, and I knew straightaway to check protocols and risk assessments before I made a decision. So, knowing that having that risk assessment knowledge helped me make the right decision and develop my self-belief.

The study participants' contextual use of the safety and risk concept as the main role of an outdoor leader in interview 1 was plausible, given their preconceived knowledge and understanding in the early stages of their degree. Porsanger and Sandseter (2021) confirmed the interlinked nature of risk and safety by specifying that safety is interwoven with risk because safety receives acknowledgement by society as a state where risk is eliminated or reduced, and it is, therefore, perceived as the opposite of risk. When looking at this same concept in the interview 2 responses, it was obvious that the study participants were starting to develop a greater understanding of the use of risk and safety within outdoor leadership.

Acknowledgment of this increase in understanding occurred as participant responses progressed past the 'I must keep them safe' and 'risk is bad' style of response.

In interview 2, some participant responses on the main role of an outdoor leader included concepts that more holistically embraced the use of activities with risk elements to connect people with the environment and stimulate many of the developmental outcomes associated with outdoor leadership and outdoor education programs. This shift in student thinking aligns with Gilbertson and Ewert's (2015) observation that risk-taking and sensation-seeking are often considered prime motivating factors for participating in adventure-based experiences in outdoor environments. Study participant Ange supported this proposition:

> I think their job is to educate people and to provide them with an environment which they feel secure in, to try things that they haven't tried before, but feel secure enough to take risks, however big or small that is, it doesn't matter as long as its something new for that person I think.

This development in the study participants' thinking, identifying the use of risk as a 'tool' rather than something to be 'scared' of, demonstrates a progression in professional identity. Progression in this context indicates growth in their understanding of the professional practice required of an outdoor leader. This progression also highlighted the participants' ability to manage dynamic situations containing risk with pedagogical and technical agility, alongside empathy, care and the appropriate level of knowledge (Mees et al., 2020) to ensure they generate the desired learning outcomes.

The capacity of the students to see the need to incorporate this use of risk and safety into their professional identity runs counter to outcomes acknowledged by Porsanger and Sandseter's (2021) study of a group of Physical Education (PE)

students who experienced considerable risk aversion. They identified that for the PE participants in their study, taking students outside into a natural space brought feelings of a lack of control and insecurity associated with their lack of knowledge surrounding risk and safety management. The feelings expressed by the PE students demonstrate a difference in the developing professional identity between the PE study participants and the participants in this current study. This difference could have arisen because the outdoor leadership students in this thesis study had several specific units dedicated to teaching the theory of risk management and how to incorporate safe practices into their professional practice across a diverse range of outdoor adventure-based activities and environments.

Facilitation

The ability to manage risk (perceived or real), manage safety, and ensure that learning outcomes are achieved, demonstrates the study participants' increased knowledge and understanding of 'facilitation' using adventure-based activities. Many of the participants' responses in interview 2 also highlighted that the main role of an outdoor leader was to 'facilitate' the outcomes required by the clients with whom they are working. Presenting this facilitation concept in their responses makes apparent that the study participants felt increasingly confident with their ability to carry out many of the daily work tasks required of them as a professional. Developing a strong and positive professional identity is aligned with growth in confidence regarding 'your' ability to carry out the work roles assigned to you (Gilardi & Lozza, 2009). It is evident in the conceptual development manifested in the study participants' responses that they were experiencing this growth in confidence and, therefore, the congruent growth in their professional identity.

The study participants' interview 3 responses concerning the main role of an outdoor leader, showed a further progression in their conceptual understanding of the roles they would need to fulfil, indicating further professional identity development. Although 'risk," 'safety' and 'facilitation' were still appearing in the responses, concepts demonstrating the synthesis of industry trends and more critical thought also appeared. These new concepts highlighted the importance of the development of 'soft skills' rather than 'hard skills, and also included the use of the environment as an object central to professional identity. Acknowledgement of the environment as an object involved in developing a student's professional identity was supported by Blumer (1969), who stated "an object is anything that can be indicated, anything that is pointed to or referred to" (p.10) and therefore the product of symbolic interaction. The participants in this study regularly referred to the natural environment in their interviews. An object can have different symbolic meanings for different individuals, and, as Blumer (1969) suggested, individuals occupying the same spatial or conceptual location may have completely different perspectives or understandings of the same phenomena. Although the PE students in the Porsanger and Sandseter (2021) study and the current study's participants are both higher education students studying degrees that involve using outdoor environments, it is noteworthy that PE students percieve the outdoor environment as an object associated with fear and risk aversion. In contrast, the outdoor leadership participants evaluate the outdoor environment as an object offering numerous possibilities for using elements of risk and safety through facilitated experiences to promote the desired learning outcomes. This development of comfort in facilitating activities in natural environments with elements of risk is an outwards projection of a strong professional identity, wherein the study participants felt that they had the experience to begin drawing upon discourses of

occupational professionalism and trust in their discretion when making judgements (Connolly & Haughton, 2015).

Qualities and Attributes of an Outdoor Leader

In addition to being asked to define the main roles of an outdoor leader, study participants were asked in interviews 1 and 2 to describe the qualities and attributes of an outdoor leader. For emerging professionals, the capacity to describe these qualities and attributes is essential to support their definition of professional identity. When attempting to develop an element of identity, a notion of an end outcome requires acknowledgement by the individual to assist in planning the conceptualisations required to achieve the desired outcome (Woike et al., 2020). Therefore, identity construction is an iterative process ranging from identity synthesis to identity confusion (Luyckx et al., 2011). It occurs through reflection on external feedback generated from the images and actions an individual disperses within their surroundings (Reuben, 2020). It follows that a form of end outcome is required for the individual to know when they are receiving the desired feedback, and for them to know if their outwards projections are congruent with their internal conceptualisations. This feedback loop was essential to the study participants' professional identity development so that if they acknowledged an attribute or quality that they wanted to achieve, there was an internal mechanism that would allow them to work towards achieving the desired identity development outcome.

Each study participant identified a range of attributes and qualities of an outdoor leader. However, all participants had a similar understanding of the attributes and skills required of an outdoor leader. The responses referred to many attributes and skills identified in outdoor leadership literature (Martin et al., 2017; Priest & Gass, 2005;

Shooter et al., 2009). Research conducted by Baker and O'Brien (2020) identified three main groupings that cover the skills and attributes of an outdoor leader: technical skills, affective abilities and conceptual practices. All participant responses would fit into one of the three groupings identified in the research of Baker and O'Brien. The fact that the participants could provide congruent responses within the listed groupings demonstrated that they were highly aware of the skills and attributes required of an outdoor leader. Awareness of these skills and attributes provided them with the 'end outcome' for the identity construction they were trying to achieve, thereby providing the mechanism to achieve their professional identity development requirements.

The variety of participant responses regarding the main roles of outdoor leaders that spanned the above groupings reinforced that, as a cohort, the participants developed an in-depth understanding of what was required by them to display the appropriate attributes and qualities of an outdoor leader. This deeper understanding will support the formulation and development of professional identity as the participants move into the industry and interact with a professional network and individuals who can acknowledge their capacity to carry out the required tasks of an outdoor leader.

Links between Professional Identity and Professional Practice

Professional practice has been a focus of outdoor leadership literature, typically focusing on the concept that outdoor professionals need to have their practice developed to be effective at both delivering their programs/work and ensuring the desired outcomes are achieved (Drury et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2006; Priest & Gass, 2018). Professional practice, which refers to the conduct and work of someone from a particular profession, signals a tangible concept that can be seen and measured.

Professional identity, a much more nebulous and conceptual notion, has not gained the same level of exposure through the outdoor leadership literature. Sutherland and Markauskaite (2012) suggested that professional identity is contested and not necessarily a clearly defined term. Much of the professional identity context for this research comes from the teaching and healthcare disciplines. These disciplines have noted strong links between professional identity development and professional practice (Ewertsson et al., 2017; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2011; R. Knight, 2014; Schepens et al., 2009). This noted link also supports the concept that an individual may have multiple identities evident in the overall construction of their professional identity (Manzi & Benet-Martinez, 2022). These multiple identities allow the individual to develop an authentic and coherent sense of self and move through various professional practice contexts.

Multiple Identities

The study participants agreed with the healthcare and teaching discipline literature's sentiment and identified links between professional practice and identity. These links focused more on technically oriented professional practice elements such as skills and qualifications. Alignment of these elements with professional identity occurred by centring on the participants' perceptions of their ability as a leader to carry out the required professional practice to achieve desired outcomes. Ewertsson et al. (2017) suggested that the concept of embodied knowledge is an essential part of the link between professional identity and professional practice. They proposed that embodied knowledge is the ability of students to gain hands-on experience to complement previous theoretical knowledge and to test performance in real-life (or close to real-life) situations. This concept has a very high technical skills focus and

supports professional identity development as a tool for validating capacity and capability. When reflected on by students, the concept of embodied knowledge can strengthen their belief in their ability (Ewertsson et al., 2017), reinforce the appropriateness of their professional choices, and strengthen their professional identity.

This concept of embodied knowledge was prominent throughout the research analysis, with the participants focusing heavily on professional practice as an influential part of their professional identity. Working in the outdoors as an outdoor leader requires a set of technical proficiencies in a range of practical skill areas. The participants frequently referenced the need to be proficient in adventure-based activity skills, outdoor living and travel skills, and a range of ancillary skills such as first aid, vehicle management and business operations. Carl's comment on professional identity and its link to professional practice during his final interview highlighted a common sentiment among the participants:

> There's much more that goes into it. They can be an outdoor leader, but they're also babysitters, they're also counsellors, at times, they're also first aiders. They're everything when those kids are with them. There's much more behind the scenes and then there is finances, there is a logistical and business side to it.

This statement encapsulated the study participants' general attitude that an individual must be multi-skilled in their professional practice to be an outdoor leader. However, an individual also needs to embrace multiple identities due to the breadth of roles they are required to fill in the delivery of their duties. Due to the breadth of the outdoor industry, an individual may have multiple identities linked to the professional roles they could be employed in at once or throughout their career (Caza and Creary, 2016). For

example, an outdoor leader could express multiple professional identities by considering themselves a professional raft guide, a professional outdoor educator, a professional residential camp manager and a professional adventure therapist all at the same time or at different times over their career, depending on their current employment. The multiple identities and multifaceted elements of the role of an outdoor leader inextricably link professional practice and professional identity and support that the development of practice and identity in course curriculum must co-occur to prepare university outdoor leadership graduates effectively.

Individuals have multiple identities that constantly change and shift in response to various internal and external stimuli. Given an individual's multiple social group memberships and roles, how they define themselves is complex. The study of how individuals manage their multiple social identities has been established as a prominent research framework within social psychology (Manzi & Benet-Martinez, 2022). While specific identities will be more prominent at different times, all those identities make up an individual's overall identity.

In regards to how the study participants linked their professional identity development throughout their course to their understanding of professional practice in outdoor leadership, Carl's statement indicates that they acknowledged the need to develop multiple identities to underpin the practice requirements needed to fulfil their roles. Carl further indicated that these identities could be those of a "skilled practitioner" in one or several specific adventure-based activity areas; "a leader," who needs to lead a group of clients/participants through an experience and ensure specific outcomes; "a babysitter" or someone like a parent who is acting in loco parentis while they have a duty of care for a group of minors. Carl continued with the list of multiple identities by adding "a counsellor," someone who can manage the mental health and

welfare of the people with whom they work; a "first aider," someone responsible for the physical safety of a group of people; "a logistician," needing to manage and be aware of all of the moving resource requirements of an outdoor program; and "business person," managing the finances and other strategic functions and operational requirements of running an outdoor program. This range of identities gives credence to the multifaceted nature of the outdoor leader role and indicates the complexity of performing the role successfully. Manzi and Benet-Martinez (2022) supported the need for an individual to develop multiple identities. They posit that when viewed through the social identity theory perspective, focusing on identity plurality, multiple social identities equip a person to meet the demands of different circumstances and contexts. In the context of professional identity, these multiple identities will help individuals adjust to the specific professional situation. They will provide greater scope for self-esteem protection or, in the case of the participants in this study, the capacity to find internal validation in their choices and not solely rely on external validation (Benish-Weisman et al., 2015).

In developing the professional identity of university outdoor leadership students, acknowledgement of identity complexity and the multiple identity conceptualisation needs consideration by curriculum developers, teaching staff, and students enrolled in outdoor leadership courses. The study participants' responses concerning the link between professional practice and professional identity are also closely connected to the need for validation regarding the work carried out. As previously mentioned, broader society struggles to understand the complexity of the role of the outdoor leader. The role is subsumed in collective concepts of 'fun' and 'play', which are regularly devalued in society and often conceptualised as located on one side of a binary, with the highly valued concept of work on the other side. Helping

university outdoor leadership students understand the multifaceted and multiple-identity nature of the profession will help them develop a professional identity that provides a strong sense of self-validation.

Competing Discourses and Narratives

Managing multiple identities for university outdoor leaders is evident in the sociocultural differences between the formal university educational setting and the professional workplace. These different contexts have very different discourses, cultures, and affordances. There is naturally some disconnect between the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed in the educational setting and those required in the professional work setting (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012). This disconnect emphasises the importance of linking professional practice and professional identity throughout the students' education. One element of the study participants' interview responses that reinforced this conceptual link between identity and practice concerned their practical experience during their studies and the fact that it was all peer-focused. Amanda commented:

> I find it difficult with doing peer stuff and, like, they're your peers, and it's hard to-- they know exactly the same as you, and it's hard. So just even doing, assistant leading with, younger groups, or even older groups in the outdoors, so you get to see more of what it actually is going to be like.

Amanda's comment stressed the need to ensure students have the best opportunity to develop their professional identity in the most robust method throughout their course. The professional practice experiences they receive must be as close as possible to the 'real' situations and events they will encounter in professional

employment. Fauquet-Alekhine and Pehuet (2016) suggested that simulated practical experiences are only support tools in professional development because they recreate environments and interactions that may not be wholly authentic and, therefore, often misconstrue context and narrative. Nevertheless, simulated practical experiences are often used because there is limited access to resources and support structures to facilitate a real-world experience. Ensuring that students receive learning opportunities as close as possible to 'real' professional situations will provide the best opportunity to minimise the sociocultural disconnect referred to above and offer the best opportunity to develop a mature professional identity in line with expected norms. Boyer (2016) and Stalheim (2021) supported this concept of utilising realistic experiences in student education. They advocated that higher education curricula should provide opportunities for students to translate and practice contextually appropriate knowledge using realistic situations to provide the best opportunity to become experienced professionals and establish a solid professional identity.

In outdoor leadership education, this congruence of educational experience with professional practice would include conducting practical activities with diverse participants and not the homogenous group of peers also studying the course. The use of peers for all of these experiences is, as Thomas (2015) outlined, a product of pedagogical inertia, wherein the activities conducted may not be the best match for the desired outcomes but are delivered because that is how it has always occurred. In this example, avoiding this pedagogical inertia would increase the authenticity of the experience for the students. It would force them to display professional competence without having the safety net of peers who could help to construct outcomes that minimise mistakes and experiential faux pas. Ensuring an authentic level of interaction

will increase the efficacy of the learning outcomes for the individual in the leadership role.

The different discourses of the educational and professional settings and their associated professional identities need management by the teaching staff while the students are engaged in their courses. With multiple identities developing, the clash between the 'student' and the 'professional' identities may cause dissonance in a student's overall professional identity development. As indicated above, Manzi and Benet-Martinez (2022) supported the concept of identity plurality when viewed through the lens of social identity theory. However, seminal work by Erikson (1968) argued that having multiple identities may create a clash and, therefore, not promote optimal identity functioning. Students may confuse the different practice needs of their different identities and consequently act in ways that may not be appropriate to the specific situation and may not be supportive of their professional identity development. The teaching staff in an educational program must be aware of the interplay of these competing identity narratives and discourses and ensure that they manage these to support the students' robust professional identity development.

The Professional Context of University

Trede et al.(2012) stated that "professional identity is a way of being and a lens to evaluate, learn and make sense of practice" (p.374). This statement suggests that students should view all university-delivered practice-based activities designed to increase their employability through a professional identity lens if they want to make the most sense of what they are doing during their education. In interview 2, the study participants were asked if they thought their study at university was professional in context. Their responses varied, some in the affirmative and others in the negative.

Several participants indicated that university was a professional context when they were engaged in field-based teaching or practical field-based activities and not a professional in context when they were in a lecture or university-based classroom. Jackson (2017) highlighted that a university's role is to properly socialise students in their intended occupation and encourage their seamless transition from student to professional. Universities educating outdoor leaders should allow these students to understand and connect with the expectations, core values, and behaviours essential to their chosen profession. For these understandings and connections to have the most effect on professional identity development, students must view their university studies (both classroom and practical) as professional practice activities linked to developing their professional identity. This strategy will give them more time to consider and prepare for their professional life and to lay down professional identity foundations. This concept suggests that students who do not consider their university studies professional in context or do not view their studies through a professional lens, are not affording themselves the best opportunity to develop their professional identity throughout their studies.

Trede et al. (2012) proposed that universities face increasing pressure from governments to develop pedagogical curricula focused on practice-based learning. This pressure and the resultant focus for universities, represent an external construct designed to prepare graduates for the world of work and ensure that they can move into their chosen profession as efficiently as possible to resolve numerous workforce and economic drivers. Many universities have prioritised that all degree-based programs develop course-based frameworks that encompass the skills, attributes, and competencies that stakeholders consider essential for a new graduate to function effectively as a professional in the workplace (Omorog, 2020). This pressure felt by

the universities has placed concepts of professional practice and professional identity at the forefront of curriculum designers' thinking. These concepts are becoming more regularly integrated within university course curricula**.**

Self-Awareness

When considering how university outdoor leadership students link their professional identity development during their course of study to their understanding of professional practice in outdoor leadership, this study's data showed that the participants struggled with the concept of professional identity throughout their course. Consequently, it was difficult for the participants to make the specific link between the concepts of professional identity and professional practice in their responses. Even though the participants struggled to link these concepts, they acknowledged that to function as effective outdoor leaders, they would need to have strong concepts of their professional practice and be highly self-aware. Thomas (2019) recognised self-awareness as an essential part of identity and identity development for outdoor leaders. Lage et al. (2022) also linked self-awareness with identity concluding that self-awareness and identity share similar foundational components such as self-recognition, metacognition, and theory of mind. These linkages between professional identity and self-awareness were further solidified as Jackson (2017) found that having a well-developed professional identity generally correlated with high levels of confidence in your capacity, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-actualisation.

Outdoor leaders must concurrently and seamlessly provide appropriate instruction, develop learning activities, process experiences, and monitor and facilitate interpersonal interactions with and for their clients while maintaining a strict focus on safety. This professional role is highly demanding, with potentially severe outcomes if

safety management is inadequate. Martin et al. (2006) emphasised that, due to the highly complex nature of their professional role, competent outdoor leaders need to be highly self-aware and clearly understand their abilities and limitations.

This identified need for self-awareness emphasises the importance of outdoor leaders linking their professional identity development to their understanding of professional practice for their overall professional growth. It also highlights the linkage between, and cyclical relationship of, professional identity and professional practice. The acknowledged improvements in professional practice will, in turn, reinforce and validate the student's professional identity choices and conceptualisations. Additionally, the improvements could further enhance the student's concept of self-awareness and link right back into their professional practice efforts and keep the developmental cycle turning.

Understanding how university outdoor leadership students link professional identity and professional practice throughout their studies is essential. Outdoor leadership degrees are highly practical and prepare graduates to fulfil roles where highly developed professional practice and professional identity are crucial to success and long-term career sustainability. Teaching staff and curriculum developers need to be fully cognisant of the interlinked nature of these concepts. Based on this awareness, teachers and curriculum developers should ensure that students have adequate exposure to learning activities that develop their professional practice and professional identity, and foster a clear understanding of the links and differences between the two.

Enablers and Inhibitors of Professional Identity Development

This section of the discussion chapter will focus on specific concepts highlighted through the data analysis. These concepts recurred throughout the responses provided by the study participants, and this section will use the overarching framework of enablers and inhibitors to explore the identified highlighted concepts. Enablers and inhibitors are things that either enable (help, support, and develop) or inhibit (prevent or slow down) professional identity development. The examined enablers and inhibitors range from curriculum-based concepts to social concepts with which the study participants interacted throughout their university education. These concepts emerged through the data and are presented from the viewpoint of their intersection between the research aim *(To explore the enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development for a group of university outdoor leadership students throughout their course)* and the themes identified within the interview data.

Enabler – Mix of Practical and Theoretical Learning

In the initial interview round, the sentiment of the study participants suggested that they preferred the practical elements of their course curriculum and felt that this was where they received most of their learning. Although they did not specifically use the concept of professional identity in the early interview rounds, several participants' responses implied that it was in the practical experiences that they received most of their professional identity development. A number of the participants also indicated that the practical elements of their curriculum initially kept them engaged in their degree. By the final interview (which for these participants occurred directly after graduation), some participant responses indicated a shift in perception. They had

begun valuing the interaction between the theoretical and practical components for their professional identity development.

The literature review and results chapters of this study outlined that a professional and entry to a profession required a higher education qualification, usually through a university (Australian Council of Professions, 2022; Guthrie, 2001; Mann, 2002; Polley, 2021; Preston, 2019). However, this notion has shifted over time in the literature to encompass other forms of tertiary education outside university-based education, including some vocational courses (Cruess et al., 2010). The concept of comprehensive education, providing foundational theoretical knowledge and frameworks on which to base critical thought, is still evident as a prerequisite required by a professional and for entry into a profession.

The shift in participants' attitudes towards a mix of theory and practical experiences signalled some growth in their understanding of professional practice requirements. This shift demonstrated a developing knowledge base that would accompany an emerging professional who recognises the complexity of their employment role (Martin et al., 2006), and an understanding of their profession and the industry in which they were planning a career. This shift also demonstrated a developing maturity within the students as they embraced the more academic elements of what can be a highly practical discipline (Drury et al., 2005).

Much of the nursing and healthcare literature explored for this study found that a mix of theoretical and practical learning produced the best professional identity development outcomes for university students (Ewertsson et al., 2017; Jackson, 2017; Paynter-Armour, 2021; Steenekamp et al., 2018). An ideological alignment of healthcare and teaching with outdoor leadership is evident due to these respective professions' practical 'hands-on', service, and care elements. Therefore, it is not

unreasonable to posit that the same learning and curriculum models used in teaching and health care would generate the best professional identity development outcomes for university outdoor leadership students.

The mix of theory and practice in the course curriculum allows the students to explore foundational theories, frameworks, and models (Thomas et al., 2021b) and discover how these concepts interact with their practical skills-based activities and other professional practice elements. It also connects the students with activities that require them to behave like a 'professional' in scenarios and situations that will test their professional identity conceptualisations and within an environment that provides secure and supportive feedback. For the best possible professional identity development outcomes through their practical experiences, the closer the students can be exposed to the 'real thing', the more genuine the experience for them. This genuine experience will provide a better opportunity for them to test their professional identity and gain the most advantageous developmental outcomes.

Delivering practical learning experiences through a course curriculum that is matched as closely as possible to actual professional work requirements supports the management of exposing students to potentially harmful outcomes in their professional identity development. These detrimental outcomes could occur if they have an experience that did not go as planned or they did not have the knowledge or ability to manage the situation. Therefore, teaching staff must ensure they provide a scaffolded approach when considering the mix of theory and practical activity in curriculum delivery. This approach will support the course goal of ensuring that students are prepared with the correct theoretical and conceptual underpinnings to participate in the learning activities to their fullest extent. The teaching staff must also have processes to manage adverse outcomes and support positive student

professional identity development in the delivered curriculum mix of practical and theoretical content.

Many of the employment roles that students will obtain during their careers may require them to conduct activities with a level of risk to their clients. Developing theoretical knowledge within the supportive practical environment of university study will enable the development of students' professional identities. This supportive environment will also minimise the chance of students experiencing adverse outcomes that were not foreseen or prepared for and could stunt or set back their professional identity development.

Enabler – Emotional Connection, Shared and Memorable Experiences

Outdoor leaders must often put the needs of others before their own. Warner et al. (2021) supported this concept when they found that outdoor leadership professional work settings can present distinctively stressful and emotionally challenging situations, including "living at work, limited time off, and expectations of maintaining certain emotional states" (p.46). Furthermore, these acknowledged work settings are very similar to the teaching and healthcare professions, with an altruistic service element at the core (Canrinus et al., 2011; Ellis & Hogard, 2020; Fagermoen, 1997). Working as an outdoor leader also provides many opportunities for emotional connections to develop within employment roles (Baker & O'Brien, 2020). These connections can manifest as emotional connections to people (clients or other staff), specific environments (locations or climates), and specific activities (assisting people to overcome challenges and the joy of new experiences) (Warner et al., 2021). For students studying to be outdoor leaders, the development of these emotional

associations can occur throughout their study and serve as an enabler of their professional identity development.

Throughout this study, several participants linked their desire to become an outdoor professional to various emotional connections, shared challenges, and memorable experiences. For some participants, their formative links to the outdoors may have initially been made with family and friends or during formal schooling before university study. Fewer participants expressed that they formed these connections throughout their university studies. Linking of these experiences to the participants' inclination towards study and a career in the outdoor industry was considered in earlier sections of the discussion chapter.

Previous literature highlighted that interactions with nature generate an emotional connection to places, people, and to the outcomes of the experience (Thomas, 2015; Wagstaff, 2016; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Schmidt (2020) posited that there is an understanding that a learner is more likely to retain the knowledge and form a stronger connection with the outcomes associated with the teaching if an emotional connection can be made between the learner and the taught content. Schmidt (2020) further proposed that a framework consisting of surface, strategic, and deep learning approaches should be considered when constructing a curriculum. Schmidt suggested that curriculum design should focus on implementing strategic and deep approaches to learning and avoid surface approaches due to the benefits of emotional connection to content for learners.

In this study, the framework outlined by Schmidt (2020) finds representation within the study participants' various course curricula. This representation of emotional connection is observed in integrating multiple reflective and reflexive activities throughout the facilitation of practical and theoretical learning. These opportunities

provided the scope for strategic and deep learning approaches where the study participants could continuously process and modify their knowledge (Gao et al., 2019). This continuous processing resulted in the participants developing or experiencing elements of emotional connection prior to or throughout their study. This growth strengthened the participant's desire to develop their professional practice and identity and pursue a career as an outdoor professional.

Among the study participants' interview responses, several statements indicated an emotional connection to their course choice or used emotive words to describe why they chose their course. Jack indicated, "I love this," John responded with "I love the course, and this is something I love to do," Shaz commented that "I loved going on all the [field] trips away," and Ange stated, "This is my life, this is pretty awesome." These types of responses were common across the study participants. This level of emotional connection to their course and choice of career is an enabler that develops professional identity: "identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotional elements" (Arroyo, 2021, p.102). Careers with strong emotional connections to employment or the work carried out often retain people in that industry/career for longer (Esop & Timms, 2019). However, one of the challenges of work/careers that see high levels of emotional connection by individuals is that they often allow themselves to be disadvantaged through various enforced workplace mechanisms. This disadvantage can occur through a range of workplace conditions such as inadequate remuneration, overwork, and outdoor leaders putting the needs of the organisation and their clients before their own (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021; Canrinus et al., 2011; Wagstaff, 2016). Nevertheless, within the context of developing the professional identity of a university outdoor leader, the capacity to generate emotionally connected, shared, and memorable experiences within courses should

exist within the curriculum. Therefore, this characteristic of good course design should foster each student's desire to pursue a career in the outdoor industry and will serve to strengthen their professional identity.

For the participants in this study, using teaching pedagogies that required them to spend extended periods engaged in practical field-based teaching generated opportunities to develop emotional connections to people, places, and outcomes. These facilitated experiences were akin to 'art imitating life'. Common terms used in industry representative of the outcomes of participation in facilitated school outdoor leadership/education programs are teamwork, connection to the environment and personal development (Drury et al., 2005; Priest & Gass, 2018; Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Brian Wattchow, 2021). The study participants were learning how to facilitate, program and deliver experiences that provided these outcomes while also participating in the experiences that provided these outcomes. This reflective and reflexive learning pedagogy process presents students with considerable opportunities to review their experiences and consider their interactions with people, places, and outcomes at a deep and foundational level. The capacity for these reflexive and reflective opportunities within the course curriculum further supports the learning framework identified by Schmidt (2020).

The concept of shared experiences was also prominent in the study participants' interview responses. Curcio and Adams (2019) reinforced the idea of shared experiences as a curriculum or pedagogical element that has considerable positive benefits for the people involved. From a professional identity development perspective, Ange acknowledged that shared experiences in the curriculum were beneficial to her development due to the "friendships" that emerged from those experiences. Sam recognised the closeness of the relationships that developed when

she stated, "Outdoor Ed is actually something where I enjoy coming into Uni because it's a different relationship with everyone compared to going into a normal lecture." She further developed this concept with another statement identifying the closeness of relationships with her classmates when attending class, "Everyone walks in and everyone's hugging each other and all the rest of it and then you'll walk into a normal lecture [non outdoor leadership] and people look at you funny if you're doing that." The study participants' assertions align with Curcio and Adams' (2019) contentions that specific educational outcomes are achieved more efficiently when familiarity and supportive relationships within the cohort exist. If the cohort is all going through the shared experience together, it becomes something that requires people to work together and display high levels of teamwork and communication. After the activity, the shared experience also creates something that can be a significant reflective opportunity, with peer feedback providing powerful and enduring developmental opportunities. Study participant responses reinforced that that a person who has just had the same learning experience, and has a high level of understanding and empathy for what another individual has just gone through, can provide powerful feedback and reflective support.

Reflective practice and sharing experiences with other like-minded students support the development of emotional connections. As indicated, these emotional and shared experiences enable the development of professional identity outcomes for university students studying to become outdoor leaders and pursue successful careers in the outdoor industry.

Enabler – Direct Feedback

Study participant interview responses frequently alluded to the idea that direct feedback is an enabler of professional identity development. The participants acknowledged that receiving direct feedback helped them reflect on and review their actions and then plan adaptions for future attempts. Ange expressed this sentiment: "feedback [during the course] helped you develop your understanding of what your job as an outdoor leader is going to be." The participant's acknowledgement of this enabling effect aligns with Finch et al. (2018), who suggested that direct feedback can support an individual to internalise their learning and make the most of the potential outcomes of a learning experience. The understanding that direct feedback can come from peers and not just from teaching staff was an important concept for the students. For example, Ange acknowledged "all of the discussions you get have with your peers about the activities you have just completed." Peer feedback's importance was acknowledged as many of the participants' courses' experiential field-based learning activities required peer feedback. Recognising that peers can also support professional identity development (Gardner & Willey, 2018) is a strong indicator of a maturing professional identity.

The outdoor industry has long acknowledged experiential learning as one of the pedagogical hallmarks associated with the programming and facilitation of outdoor leadership education activities (Drury et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2006, 2017; Phipps, 2017; Priest & Gass, 2018). Elements of experiential learning pedagogy were evident in all facets of the study participants' curricula throughout their course delivery. Roberts (2011) proposed that the term 'experiential learning' is still epistemologically contested in the literature and has tautological limitations. However, it was identified that in this thesis study, the experiential learning process created a space for direct

feedback on actions during the study participants learning and professional identity development (Priest & Gass, 2018). This feedback capacity, therefore, created an iterative process for future development.

The participants' interview responses identified exemplars of direct feedback that enabled professional identity development. For example, Aaron indicated that his learning experiences allowed him to learn through "trial and error, which is the best way to learn." At the same time, Beth stated, "there's a lot more you learn by experience than reading it out of the textbook." Sam suggested she liked "going into the real setting and consolidating our learning" because it provided her with "direct feedback." The students had multiple opportunities throughout their course to use direct feedback to support their professional identity development through judgement and decision-making opportunities. This learning strategy aligns with the work of Fellenz (2016), who identified that professionals are not expected to carry out their employment duties in canonical ways but instead need to adjust their actions based on real-time and direct feedback that is contextually and situationally specific. This idenitification dictates that the study participants engaged in developing their professional identity should also have exposure to the same or similar experiential process that provides them with direct feedback on their actions. Jackson (2017) concurred with the need for direct feedback to enable professional identity development, stating that direct feedback "allows students to play or experiment with the identity associated with a particular role" (p.839). The design of the current outdoor leadership course facilitated student experimentation, which allowed for ontological exploration of self-perception and external perceptions related to their professional identity conceptualisation and formation.

Identity formation is a fluid process involving constructed methods of 'closure' upon which an individual will construct their identity (Berry et al., 2019). The study participants experienced this process when they attempted/performed actions and subsequently received feedback on those actions. This feedback indicated whether their attempt had a positive or negative outcome regarding how they wanted to be perceived. The participants would then internalise this outcome as a successful or unsuccessful attempt to develop their identity, creating a 'closure' regarding this element of their identity formation. This closure is conceptual, and given that identity formation is not static (Gardner & Willey, 2018), the process of attempt and closure happens as often as the student continues to shape and reshape their identity to fit the existing context. Carl demonstrated this concept of closure through his statement:

> I've learned a lot about myself and my limits, my ability to self-reflect. So, I now know how to-- basic paddling skills, pretty good navigational [skills] and bushwalking skills, cross-country skiing, mountain biking. I've conquered a few fears, in regards to heights, I found out what outdoor education actually is and in three years was really able to think about what I thought about it and what I my personal view was and which career path I wanted to go down, in regards to outdoor ed. So, that's something I picked up and learnt.

In his statement, Carl listed several specific elements of his professional identity, such as specific activity skills, conceptual understanding, and career contemplation. In formulating this list, he would have conceptualised the success or failure of his attempts based on internal and external feedback from various sources. Listing these elements highlighted a conceptual closure; Carl recognised his success in achieving positive development with these elements of professional identity.

This 'closure' concept is aligned with the concept of direct feedback. For professional identity development, these 'closure' experiences occur when students find professional validation (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018) through direct feedback. Direct feedback allows them to either 'close' this element of their professional identity formation or keep it 'open' and continue to reshape and experiment with their identification through further direct feedback, until they are satisfied with their professional identity. Ange's interview response referred to this process: "[it] depends on the feedback that you're receiving from that person about how you're interacting with them, so you're constantly reshaping your identity." This iterative process underscores direct feedback's role as an enabler in developing professional identity for university outdoor leaders.

Enabler – Role Modelling

The participants in this study indicated that observing role models is an essential enabler of developing their professional identity. Felstead (2013) proposed that the term role model is often described as a person who typifies conduct, a social role for others to imitate, and someone who sets a positive example whose attitudes and values are assimilated by learners.

The delivery of field-based curriculum content in the outdoor leadership course required the teaching staff to engage in the delivery of professional practice activities. The staff were in the field with students, paddling down rivers, scaling rock faces, attending to first aid requirements, managing the individual and group needs, and making situational decisions and judgements that impacted the students' learning outcomes. These actions occurred while students were actively engaged in both processes and practices. This method of pedagogical delivery is different from other

university course staff-student learning interactions, in which the staff typically conduct lectures/workshops/tutorials and discuss professional practice and behaviour within a classroom context. Consequentially, in those situations, the students do not observe the staff directly or realistically engaged in professional practice activities, which can reduce the opportunities for and impact of role modelling as an enabler of professional identity development. The meaningful level of staff-student interaction in outdoor leadership unit delivery allowed the study participants to observe high levels of behaviour congruence. This congruence occurred as the participants observed their lecturing staff communicating, implementing and testing concepts, theories, and frameworks. This role modelling and highly relational pedagogy support the students on a learning journey and assist them when interrogating their experiences and developing their knowledge, skills, and professional identity.

A valuable theory to investigate the enabling effect of role modelling for the study participants' professional identity development is Bandura's theory of social learning, as framed by Horsburgh and Ippolito (2018). They postulated that the theory outlines that learning occurs in a social setting via observation and involves cognitive processes. These cognitive processes are very similar to the processes used in identity development and are very useful to consider within the context of this study. Specifically, the four scaffolded stages of the theory (attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation) are represented in the study participants' interview responses. Representation of the *attention* stage occurred in Johns' comment regarding how he understood the qualities required of an outdoor leader: "watching how yourself [researcher] and the other lecturers go about things when we are on [field] trips," which highlights that the study participants needed to observe the behaviour they wanted to reproduce or that others needed them to reproduce. The *retention* stage was apparent

in the data, with James finding that being "in a situation with the staff highlights the stuff you need to know…as you have to think through how you would do the same thing." James' comment indicated that the participants needed to internalise and retain what they observed through cognitive mental rehearsal processes. Stella identified the *reproduction* stage: "it's really important to watch others [staff] and then put what you have learned into practice." Her statement underscored the concept that students need to convert the information generated from the attention and retention processes into action. The final stage, *motivation*, featured in Sam's comment that "support is a big thing." Sam was referencing how staff in the course helped her professional identity development. At the same time, Sam's comment highlights that participants needed to be motivated by teaching staff to imitate or enact the behaviours they have observed.

When further considering the enabling effect of role modelling for professional identity development in relation to the four stages of Bandura's theory and the current research context, the following alignments are highlighted: 1. the attention phase ensures that the students are present and involved; 2. the retention phase requires that students attune to the need for internal review and processing of their experiences; 3. the reproduction stage necessitates the provision of opportunities for them to practice; and 4. the motivation stage accentuates the need for teaching staff to build relationships (Snell et al., 2020) and to support the students to attempt and challenge their prior conceptualisations and perceptions throughout the stages. These stages would not be possible without the staff initially carrying out professional development activities as role models that the students can observe. This enabling effect of role modelling on professional identity development highlights the importance of university teaching staff engaging with their students at a functional and experiential

level (Nehmeh & Kelly, 2021). This positive effect cannot be achieved by staff only teaching from the front of the classroom, conveying information and knowledge through didactic pedagogy. Such approaches reduce their ability to be role models and to enable their students' professional identity development effectively.

Enabler – Validation

Validation was a recurrent theme in the study's research data. The study participants perceived the concept of validation (e.g., social, internal) as directly linked to their professional identity development. Audet et al. (2022) posited that forming an identity is a critical developmental task affected by essential people in an individual's social environment, such as friends and family, and in this research context, the teaching staff and fellow students. Across all three rounds of interviews, participants expressed a strong need for validation through internal and external mechanisms to support their career and course choices. For example, Beth found validation through external sources when she explained her course and future career to friends and family: "It's quite interesting to see them actively or openly appreciate what you do."

Becoming an outdoor leader is not only about learning specific activity skills, relevant content, facilitation strategies, risk management, decision-making, and group management. It is also a complex professional identity development process where personal values and professional demands interact (Gracia et al., 2021). These interactions within outdoor leadership course delivery require careful management of the interplay, to avoid students suffering identity crises. Nehmeh and Kelly (2021) contended that validation of an individual's decisions is an important factor in self-determination and in developing the internal motivation required to follow through with a chosen decision path. Consistent with these findings, Amanda mentioned that "My

mum's really supportive. She is…, always telling me to not give up and to keep going."

Carl also referenced validation:

> Mum and dad both think it's really good, both for my personal life as well,
> they think it's going to give me a lot of personal attributes, even if I don't
> go into outdoor ed afterwards. They think it will be handy for when I go
> overseas and in the future as it's a good backup to teaching.

These comments are representative of the sentiments of the majority of the study participants. Validation from external sources, such as family, friends and teaching staff, and internal validation through success in their attempts at course-related work, were essential to the participant's development of their abilities as outdoor professionals.

The study participants reported that validation from family and friends occurred more easily when the family and/or friends understood outdoor leadership or had prior experience engaged in the outdoors for recreation, leisure, or employment. Renee's comments captured this link: "they're pretty supportive because we all have grown up camping." As professional identity development throughout an outdoor leadership course requires considerable identity exploration, having the support of family and friends regarding their choices was very useful to students (Sundly & Galway, 2021)

Family and friends play an important role in promoting identity exploration (Audet et al., 2022). The participants who responded that they had external validation from family and friends also reported finding internal (self) validation for their course and career choice was easier. Concurrently, participants who reported high levels of internal validation were also more likely to be able to communicate their decision-making regarding their course and career choice in a way that contributed to validation from external sources. This supportive mechanism of internal and external validation

(Davey, 2013) and the associated positive outcomes for the study participants, reinforce the enabling effect of validation as a critical component in the professional identity development of university outdoor leaders.

Inhibitor – The Concept of Professional Identity

Across the entire data collection phase, the study participants acknowledged the concept of identity as a course learning domain they had not considered. Furthermore, their conceptualising of professional identity received even less attention. This limited understanding of identity and professional identity inhibited participants' ongoing capacity to develop their professional identity.

As previously discussed in the literature review, the concept of identity is multi-dimensional (Luyckx et al., 2011), enigmatic (Fearon, 1999), complex and dynamic (Sardabi et al., 2018), and has been incompletely defined over time (McAdams, 2011). This ongoing challenge to define or explain identity in the social context is somewhat congruent with the study participants' inability to explain or conceptualise identity and professional identity. This difficulty was evident in the comments by James in interview two. When asked to define or describe his identity, James responded, "I hate this question, it stumps me every time." Tim also indicated, in interview one, that, "It's a tough one, talking about yourself, I don't know." The participants' inability to define or describe their identity and, therefore, their professional identity would make it difficult for them to understand who they are as individuals and whom they need to become to satisfy their identity and professional identity conceptualisations.

When considering identity and identity development, Mansfield et al. (2022) suggested that self-study was a meaningful way to develop identity. The concept of self-study for professional identity development implies a reflective and reflexive

process, which requires an understanding of 'who you currently are', and then 'who you want to become'. For the study participants to make this assessment, it would require an understanding of the concept of their identity and, in the case of professional identity, the intentional decision to develop with specific professional outcomes in mind (Iwasa et al., 2019). As evidenced by Stella, the study participants struggled to do either of these things. For example, when asked to describe her identity, Stella replied, "I don't know; what do you mean." The inability of the participants to respond meaningfully to this question highlighted a lack of understanding of the concepts of identity and professional identity. This lack of understanding of these concepts would inhibit their ability to develop their professional identity effectively.

The study participants were not asked about professional identity in the first interview round. To understand the student's knowledge of their professional identity, the researcher used a questioning technique to build communities of practice (Kayi-Aydar & Goering, 2019). Within this study, this technique required participants to reflectively consider what other people thought of their professional attributes as a mechanism to help them understand and consider these attributes. In this way, the approach intended to help the participants consider elements of their professional identity without having to understand the concept of professional identity specifically or have it explained. The participants could then identify what other people thought about them, thereby indirectly identifying elements of their professional identity. Although this questioning technique produced some results regarding their professional identity, it further highlighted the participants' challenges with the overall concept of identity and professional identity.

Identity and identity development are nebulous concepts that are difficult to define and understand (Mateer et al., 2021). In order to maximise developmental

impact on their overall professional development, outdoor leadership students must acknowledge how an understanding of these concepts can benefit their ability to develop their professional identity. For example, if students do not understand the concept of identity and professional identity, they are less likely to be able to adequately explain their professionalism and the profession they have chosen to engage with during their course and subsequent employment. This lack of capacity will hinder the internal and external validation (Snell et al., 2020) of their professional status and choices, thereby further inhibiting the ongoing development of their professional identity in a meaningful and intentional direction.

The need to be indirect with the line of questioning about professional identity highlights the requirement for teaching staff to take time early in the curriculum to cover the topic and concept of identity and professional identity and associated learning frameworks with their students (Jackson, 2017). This early intervention is needed so students can progress through their degrees and make intentional decisions about their professional identity development. It is also required to ensure that the lack of understanding surrounding concepts of identity and professional identity does not inhibit students' professional identity development.

Inhibitor – Public Perception and Role Confusion

The public perception of outdoor leaders and the outdoor leadership profession was a concept regularly featured in study participant interview responses. This concept, and the allied notion of validating the participants' professional choices through family and friends' support, have also received examination. However, when further investigating these concepts, additional attention must be given to the inhibitory

effect that public perception can have on a student's professional identity development and the associated role confusion accompanying this inhibitor.

Martin et al. (2017), Mann, (2002), and Polley, (2021) all indicated that broader society and individuals outside the field could perceive outdoor leadership as fun and rarely value it as a profession. This comment aligns with many of the study participants' interview comments. For example, James stated, "they think it's a bit of a holiday, not really school," and Renee also stated, "you just have fun," when they described some of the public perceptions they had been exposed to when discussing their course and professional choices with other people. These comments were representative of the other study participants' responses and collectively conveyed a sense of the devaluing negativity others felt toward their professional choices.

The devaluing impact of negative public perceptions served as an inhibitor to the study participants' professional identity development. This insight is consistent with the work of Snook et al. (2022), who argued that professional identity development could be supported if the individual experiences a sense of appreciation from external sources. Conversely, if this support is not received, this may challenge their development. Fenu et al. (2021) posited that career choice will significantly impact a person's life. From a psychosocial and socio-relational perspective, the study participants' career and choice of profession serve as a prominent identity element, consuming a considerable part of their overall identity development capacity. If the study participants did not receive positive support stimulated by broader social perceptions, they can begin to challenge their internal assumptions and course and career choices (Khalid & Husnin, 2019). This challenge can create a disequilibrium surrounding their identity development as their internally supported choices are not validated through external social support. If this occurs, the participant may see the

choices surrounding their university course and future profession as flawed and re-evaluate those choices, forcing them to challenge and re-examine their professional identity.

Study participant responses highlighted the importance of societal validation. For example, when asked to identify experienced societal challenges regarding her choice of course and profession, Sarah stated that "because you enjoy what you do, they [society] say then it can't be work if you're enjoying it so much, you have to be actually working." This downgrading of the worth of the participants 'work' in the outdoor profession to something akin to 'play' recurred across the interview responses. The existence and use of this social binary of 'work versus play' (Butler et al., 2011; Kavanagh, 2011) was a definite inhibitor to the participants' professional identity development.

Traditionally, play and work are seen as opposites (Liana et al., 2020). The conceptualisation of these opposites establishes a social binary reinforced through a purely capitalistic perspective (Kavanagh, 2011). This binary suggests that 'work' at one end of the spectrum is conducted by adults and is something of value to society, while 'play' at the other end is childish and of little value to society (Lee et al., 2021). This conceptualisation that outdoor leaders' work was not as valuable as other jobs created considerable role confusion for the study participants. The nature of this overarching inhibitor of participants' professional identity development is illuminated by Lucassen (2021): "Only a prejudice bred by Western capitalism and its industrial labour markets fixes on strenuous effort expended for money payment outside the home as 'real work', relegating other efforts to amusement" (p.2). Lucassen's statement adds credence to the devaluing the study participants felt because of the negative social perceptions of their course and career choices.

Several study participants agreed that their course choice and potential future employment could be fun. Jack espoused this sentiment by stating that the learning experiences in his course were "like being on a school camp, where you're just learning things and it's all fun." Even though many employees [and students] expect their work to be 'fun and enjoyable' (Tews et al., 2020), the overarching social discourse is that work is the opposite to play. Lee et al. (2021) postulate that play and fun have previously been represented as unconnected with work because of concerns that they might sabotage productivity and performance. This contrast between work and play supports the current western capitalist narrative surrounding the importance of work. It strengthens the social perception that an individual's work that society considers play is not as valued. Consequently, when students trying to validate their professional and educational choices have to fight against this social perception constantly, it will have an inhibitory effect on their professional identity development.

Inhibitor – University and Profession Congruence

Ensuring that students have the best opportunity to develop a strong and mature professional identity necessitates a high level of congruence between their university-based learning tasks and the employment tasks they will be required to undertake in their professional roles. Moseley et al. (2021) recommended that professional identity formation can be inhibited due to a level of cognitive dissonance for the student if there are low levels of congruence between the student's formal course curriculum and their experience in professional roles. The participants in this study supported this concept by acknowledging that one of their preferred course elements was the relevance of their course experiences to what they would expect to experience in a professional setting. James highlighted this quality: "coming to uni and

learning stuff is gaining more and more experience, it's real experience in our field."

Ange also added, regarding her professionally aligned experiences at university, "it's made me understand what I want to be as a professional." Given that the study participants acknowledged the enabling effects of this high level of congruence, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that if there were low levels of congruence, it would inhibit their professional identity development.

Contemporary universities are engaged in neo-liberal (Carey, 2021) and economically rationalist (Colic-Peisker, 2016) course delivery practices. Munge and Thomas (2021) proposed that it can be challenging for a student's professional identity development when they learn that not everyone in an organisation may share their belief in the efficacy of outdoor leadership fieldwork and the powerful learning outcomes it can deliver. This suggestion is valid for the participants in this study who found it challenging to deal with how the university restricted their access to professional-level field teaching experiences. For example, when discussing what curriculum aspects needed improving in the course, Jack stated, "I think each year our field time decreases, it seems to be getting more diluted, because of what the uni expects."

The narrowing down of practical experience opportunities runs counter to the proposition by Marsden et al. (2012) that considerable time engaged in field experience is crucial for outdoor leader professional development. Reducing field teaching time for students engaged in university outdoor leadership courses will decrease the congruence between the course of study's outcomes and the industry's professional requirements. Previous studies have found that outdoor leadership employment requires applied and practical teaching strategies to develop outdoor leaders for this employment (Drury et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2017; Priest & Gass,

2018). Therefore, the results of this study would imply that a lack of congruence between course delivery and outcomes and industry professional practice requirements would inhibit the professional identity development of university outdoor leadership students.

Several of the study participants indicated that they believed there were elements of their course curriculum not covered adequately in the delivery of their three-year course. Beth highlighted this deficit and mentioned "the bush therapy stuff," and Carl noted "environmental science theory," as examples of gaps in the curriculum delivery that they felt were required to develop their professional practice and professional identity. These perceived gaps could also be inhibitory factors in developing their professional identity. The gaps signal a lack of congruence between the participants' expectations of course delivery and the structures and frameworks that the university provide for their course delivery. Sellnow-Richmond et al. (2020) proposed that courses are vulnerable to institutional financial considerations, namely that design may involve cost reductions to satisfy economic rather than educational indicators. These constraints on course delivery limit the scope of design for a specific type of units (subjects) to be delivered throughout the degree (e.g., practical, classroom). The provision of this framework which is operationalised about a prescribed level of resources such as teaching staff, physical equipment and finances, will be influential in determining the content covered in a course. Marsden et al. (2012), Martin (2008), Priest and Gass (2018), and Swiderski (1987) presented different frameworks for understanding the knowledge and skill required to be an effective outdoor leader. These frameworks present a depth of knowledge and skill development that will take several years to master (Wagstaff, 2016). However, the limitations of the university concerning time and capacity for course provision means

that not all elements in the broad scope of these outdoor leadership development frameworks will be able to be covered in detail. The teaching staff need to decide which elements will provide the best professional identity development for their students and be possible within the university's limited time, resources, and finances.

The above concept surrounding curriculum delivery concepts can receive further attention when considered from the perspective of students identifying elements that they found either inhibited or enabled their professional identity development and the overall response by the university to their preferences. Across all three interviews, participants mentioned specific curriculum elements that they found memorable or beneficial regarding their professional identity development during their studies. Participants also mentioned curriculum elements that they found to be lacking or inadequate. In this context, Renee stated that she "enjoyed the physical and mental challenge of being in the field," and Beth liked "being able to be part of that community as it makes it nice to be at Uni." Nat liked the "theoretical aspects as they actually link into things we do on the [field] trips, and that's really helpful." Ange indicated that she "expected to develop more hard skills," and Amanda wanted more chances "to 'real' take groups out" as she found it "difficult always doing peer-based stuff".

Although students are at the beginning of their professional journeys and in the initial phases of their professional identity development, Gronberg et al. (2021) and Steyn et al. (2019) agreed that student feedback should receive consideration when developing or providing a student-centred university degree course curriculum. Hurlimann et al. (2013) suggested that university academics should be highly connected and attuned to the academic needs of students. This suggestion, when located in the neoliberal and economically rationalist organisational environment in

which university courses are delivered, would reinforce the notion that viewing students as 'customers' and, therefore, active participants and co-producers of the learning experience (Steyn et al., 2019) is necessary to ensure that students needs are catered for adequately. If this does not occur, students will use their 'purchasing power', and select other courses at universities that they perceive will better meet their developmental needs.

It was evident from this study participants' responses that they felt that the university was not placing educational outcomes or the students at the centre of the learning experience but, instead, focussing on economic drivers to operationalise course delivery. This concept highlights another example of a lack of congruence between the university and the profession (or, in this case, the emerging professionals) whereby the operationalised delivery structures are not fully responding to the students' needs, thereby inhibiting their professional identity development.

When considering the university and outdoor leadership congruence dilemma, it could be proposed that organisational limitations and the scope of course delivery can contribute to a lack of alignment between student expectations regarding course delivery (what they think they will get) and the industry expectations of student capacity regarding developing their professional identity (what they think they need). This incongruence between the students' and universities' priorities could inhibit outdoor leaders' professional identity development.

Inhibitor – The Personal Cost of Being an Outdoor Leader in the Outdoor Profession

In the interviews, several study participants reported that they had experiences in which studying for an outdoor leadership degree and a career in the outdoor

leadership profession impacted and will impact their personal lives. This acknowledgement of perceived impact by the participants is another inhibitor to consider in developing their professional identity while studying.

Research conducted by Hodge et al. (2021) indicated that balancing the competing demands of extended compulsory field teaching experiences with other paid work, family duties, and additional study requirements could impact students' finances, family and personal life, employment opportunities, physical and mental health, and course attrition rates. Renee's commentary aligned with the research of Hodge et al.:

> Three weeks for five days in a row, and that's starting to have a big effect
>
> on our personal relationship, it's just that it takes up so much of my time,
>
> taking off work, and obviously, there is the cost.

Renee emphasised how her time engaged in field-based teaching impacted her social life and relationships and questioned the requirement for extended time in the field. The challenge associated with time away from family and friends expressed by Renee establishes a delivery challenge given Thomas' (2015) claim that time spent in the field is a signature pedagogy for the development of outdoor leaders and is, therefore, a required component of the course curriculum. This conundrum highlights the clash between requiring students to spend time in the field to develop their professional identity and the risk that the required field teaching could also inhibit the development of their professional identity because of the associated personal costs.

The participants in this study acknowledged that, as their studies progressed, they could better explain why they were frequently 'away'. Carl explained that "most of my close friends understand it now" when communicating the impact his repeated time away in the field had on his personal relationships. However, Nat stated that her

parents were "not happy or supportive" of her chosen course and career path "no matter how much I explain it to them," which created "massive challenges" at home in her relationship with her parents. Due to participants' professional choices, these personal impacts are common to the outdoor leadership industry, with Munge and Thomas (2021) confirming that outdoor leaders commonly experience challenges in maintaining relationships.

The personal cost of being an outdoor leader is experienced by students when their study requires them to prioritise university field teaching requirements over personal engagements (e.g., social gatherings, sporting events and other work opportunities). Although these prioritisations will be a required element of the students' professional lives (even outside of the outdoor industry), it may inhibit professional identity development when acknowledged as an expectation in their career progression. This effect may become apparent when the student is forced to re-evaluate their professional choices due to external pressures exerted by family and friends. Study participant interview responses captured this feeling of missing out on work opportunities and important social experiences and milestones. Carl highlighted that:

> It is hard work. You're out on camps all the time, not seeing your mates, missing out on work, and trying to cover all your shifts at work and it's expensive because you have to buy all the gear and pay for everything.

Carl's comments draw attention to the constant struggle for professional identity development for emerging university outdoor leaders due to the competing pressures of university and other personal life requirements. Although the literature indicates that this has always been a challenge (Thomas, 2001), the inhibitory impact of these

competing pressures on students' professional identity development has been identified and acknowledged in this study.

Chapter 6 – Recommendations and Conclusion

Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents a diverse set of recommendations derived from this study. The recommendations consider a range of practice and research-based endorsements centred on the findings associated with this research. The implications of these findings and the resultant recommendations will also be explained. The limitations of this study will also be examined. The conclusion will provide an overview of this study, linking its findings and research aims, and highlighting its contribution to extending the knowledge of professional identity development in outdoor leadership students.

Recommendations for Practice

As indicated throughout this study, the outdoor leadership profession and industry focus on how practice is implemented and conducted (Baker & O'Brien, 2020; Polley, 2021; Thomas, 2001). Therefore, when considering recommendations from this study, it would follow that practice-based recommendations would be prominent. The following section will consider a range of practice-based recommendations based on evidence derived from this study. These recommendations will address many of the positive professional identity-related outcomes acknowledged in this study to strengthen concepts of professional identity for outdoor leadership students and the broader outdoor industry.

Review Outdoor Leadership Course Curriculum to Connect Students to Concepts Regarding Professional Identity

This study has shown that it is important for students to be explicitly introduced to the idea and concept of professional identity early in their course curriculum. This early introduction will initiate better preparation of students for entry into employment roles and support them through the challenging early years of practice (Snell et al., 2020). An early introduction to this concept's theories and frameworks will give students more time to conceptualise notions such as identity and professional identity. It will allow university outdoor leadership students to consider the interactions between their multiple other identities and their professional identity. The early introduction will also present the idea of the intentionality of thought and action when attempting to construct their professional identity throughout their course delivery. The early introduction to concepts relating to 'the professional' will help the student, and emerging professional understand their requirements as a professional in the industry. This understanding will ensure they can develop a strong foundation for their professional identity throughout their course delivery.

Continued reinforcement of the idea of professional identity is recommended in the course curriculum. Ryan and Carmichael (2016) supported this reinforcement notion and indicated that identity building is not an isolated event but requires multiple intersections of knowledge, people, and context throughout the progress of a degree program. These intersectional efforts can be implemented in various ways responsive to the particular course context. However, continued reinforcement will provide students with the best opportunity to internalise their understanding of professional identity and therefore be able to act with intentionality when moving through the process of professional identity construction. Ongoing, structured, and facilitated

developmental opportunities will allow the student to be reflective and reflexive in their identity development. This intentionality will foreground the notion of professional identity into the conceptualisations of their other academic efforts during their course. This process of early introduction and repeated reinforcement will provide a solid opportunity for each student to develop the most robust and mature professional identity.

Develop Students' Ability to Communicate the Value of the Outdoor Industry and of being an Outdoor Professional

A recurring participant comment in this study was the need for validation from a variety of sources as a mechanism to support the formation of their professional identity (Audet et al., 2021). It is recommended that all units taught within the course contain some teaching content or specific learning outcomes that require the students to demonstrate an understanding of industry structural knowledge (e.g., peak bodies, career development pathways) and industry-based nomenclature. The resulting knowledge and enhancement of the student's ability to communicate their value will address their need for internal and external validation.

As students revisit, refine or change existing identities as they move through university (Azmitia et al., 2013), the need to validate these changes is important for their progress towards desired goals. This validation requirement is both internal and external, with the students having to validate their own choices through internal mechanisms based on their positive experiences and successful identification attempts. Furthermore, they seek external validation from family (Sundly & Galway, 2021), friends and broader society towards supporting their choice of degree and career. Critical to supporting and ensuring that this desire for validation is satisfied is

the requirement for students to develop the capacity to communicate the value of the outdoor industry and the outdoor professional through the knowledge obtained in their degree studies. Students need to learn to do so in ways that give the people they interact with an understanding and appreciation of the social value and benefits of outdoor professionals and the outdoor industry.

Students need to learn to communicate their professional 'value' to others using correct nomenclature, which, as indicated by Aygun et al. (2020), is a leading indicator of future professional success. Students also need to understand appropriate theories and frameworks and how to explain them in a contextually appropriate manner. If they can do this, students will maximise the likelihood that others will form positive associations with the concept of the course that they have chosen to undertake and the career choices that they have made.

If the students develop a capacity to have positive interactions regarding their 'value', they will receive the positive external validation they desire. This positive external validation will then support their internal validation requirements, making it easier to continue their identification attempts and develop a solid foundation for long-term positive professional identity development.

Provide a Balance of Theory and Field-Based Learning Experiences in University Outdoor Leadership Curriculum

This research has discussed the importance of providing theoretical and practical learning experiences in the course curriculum for university outdoor leaders. It is recommended that both of these learning elements and pedagogical styles are effectively structured into the course curriculum to support the development of students' professional identities and that students are made aware of these elements

through marketing and public relations efforts before their enrollment in a university program.

The literature and the study participant responses highlighted the essential nature of field-based teaching to develop students' hard, soft and meta-skills (Priest & Gass, 2018), their affective abilities (Baker & O'Brien, 2020), and their theoretical knowledge of relevant concepts and frameworks (Martin et al., 2017). The study participants' responses, when considered with existing literature, reinforce the importance for students studying to be outdoor leaders of spending time engaged in classroom-based learning, which includes foundational knowledge of theories and contexts and supports the development of technical, interpersonal and judgement skills and knowledge (Kosseff, 2012).

The challenge of providing field-based learning in the current higher education system has briefly been discussed in this study. It is, however, a contested concept where universities' neoliberal (Carey, 2021) and economic rationalist (Colic-Peisker, 2016) agendas can be at odds with the need to provide robust, broad and industry-relevant educational outcomes. Teaching staff within university-based outdoor leadership courses need university management to support field-based learning opportunities for students that provide graduate outcomes highly aligned with university-level strategic drivers and address industry and stakeholder expectations.

Integrating classroom- and field-based pedagogy supports students' access to the content and knowledge required to ensure they graduate with a strong and mature professional identity. This integration must also be balanced across pedagogical styles so that students remain engaged with their learning journey while at the same time developing the breadth of knowledge and skills required by the industry. A failure to achieve this balance may result in students becoming disenchanted with the

curriculum provided by the university to prepare them for a sustainable career in the outdoor industry. Nat supported this notion of balance when she discussed the pedagogical benefit of the link between field-based and classroom-based teaching: "in Outdoor Ed it all link[s] together, and you actually remember it better, and it makes more sense." The mismatch that could occur if this balance is not achieved could inhibit the student's professional identity development and lead to them questioning the outdoor industry as a career path.

Encourage Academic Staff to Work to Raise the Professional Standing of the Outdoor Industry and Outdoor Leaders

This study reinforces the challenge for students' professional identity development posed by negative public perceptions of outdoor leaders and the outdoor industry. It is recommended that academic staff engaged in delivering university outdoor leadership courses connect and strengthen relationships with peak bodies and other industry stakeholders. This connection will develop strategies to shift public perception from viewing the outdoor industry and profession of outdoor leadership as one that is not generally valued, recognised or supported (Guthrie, 2001) to one that is valued, understood and encouraged. It is also recommended that university academic staff undertake research addressing negative public perceptions. This research should collect and examine data that can inform policymakers and government stakeholders and encourage them to create social change that improves the public perception of the outdoor industry and outdoor professionals.

Polley (2021) states that "In Australia, outdoor environmental education is a profession that slips between the cracks" (p.366). Ange also reinforced this perspective by commenting, "many people will just go, oh you're going on holiday. I

suppose they don't really understand that's it is work, they're just sort of like, "Oh, it's just a bludge" when referring to responses she had received from people about her chosen profession. We need to shift public perception towards valuing an outdoor leader's work and improve the outdoor industry's professional standing. These changes will enable university outdoor leadership students to resist the inhibitory effect of the current public sentiment and have fewer obstacles to developing a robust professional identity. A shift in public perception and improvements in the development of students' professional identities will also reinforce the outdoor industry's professional standing in Australia and internationally.

Deliver and Include Effective Role Modelling to Support Students' Professional Identity Development

This study acknowledged the importance of effective role modelling for developing students' professional identities. It is recommended that role modelling of professional practice skills and competencies be prominent in the curriculum design of university outdoor leadership courses. This role-modelling capacity is only possible if the teaching staff engage with the students in field-based teaching experiences where the delivery of skills and critical thinking (e.g., decision-making, judgement) is required to facilitate the learning outcomes.

The operationalisation agenda of universities may struggle with a role modelling focussed approach because the capacity for staff to engage in this type of field-based teaching can be seen as costly. This teaching requirement is also generally not represented in the industrial agreement mechanisms of universities. Certain practices can result in hidden costs, such as increased workloads and staff burnout (Hall & Jostad, 2020), leading to a university's teaching requirements becoming

unmanageable, unsafe, and inequitably applied across all staff. Role modelling requires teaching staff to satisfy industry skill and competency requirements through continually re-accrediting their skills and capacity. Furthermore, the institution can see this re-accreditation requirement as costly from human resource management (Munge et al., 2018), financial, and time perspectives.

Participants in this study identified that role modelling by staff presented a high level of congruence between their words (in class teaching) and their actions (in field teaching). John supported this notion of congruence: "watching how yourself and the other lecturers go about things, [in class and] when we're on trips. I think that helps give you grounding on what you need to do and where you need to be." Congruence engenders considerable levels of trust in the student-staff relationship. Trust provides a strong base for students to construct a professional identity as they can observe the teaching staff role modelling the same behaviours and requirements that the students will need to display while working in the outdoor industry (Mathe et al., 2021).

Curriculum design and delivery should undergo development in a way that fosters the use of role modelling. At the same time, support from university management should be sought to satisfy the operationalisation agendas of the institution. If these two things occur, they will benefit the students' professional identity development. Using role modelling frameworks throughout the course curriculum will provide students with 'real world' insights into the professional capacity of staff. This will occur as students can see staff carrying out 'real world' work-related tasks and not just speaking about them from the front of the classroom. Students can subsequently model best practices as an employee of the outdoor industry, further supporting their professional identity development.

Compensate for the Personal Cost of Studying Outdoor Leadership Through

Innovative Curriculum Development

Throughout this study's interviews, several participants commented on the personal cost of their choice to study for an outdoor leadership degree. They noted that they could see how costs may be borne throughout their careers. It is appropriate to reconsider a comment from Renee as an example that exemplifies this challenge:

> Three weeks for five days in a row, and that's starting to have a big effect
>
> on our personal relationship, it's just that it takes up so much of my time,
>
> taking off work, and obviously, there is the cost

Personal costs include negative or detrimental impacts on students' intimate or familial relationships, social relationships, work opportunities, and finances, as well as challenges to their personal identity through intersections with their professional identity by always feeling 'at work' due to the frequency of their work commitments. Therefore, it is recommended that course curriculum designers consider managing this 'personal cost' in their curriculum design to support the student's professional identity development.

The need to manage this 'personal cost' will challenge some current curriculum designs and other recommendations of this study. It establishes a conundrum. First, time engaged in field-based teaching is the primary element listed by students for the occurrence of this personal cost and negative impact on their professional identity. Second, time engaged in field-based teaching is the same element listed by students as necessary for the positive development of their professional identity. Third, time engaged in field-based teaching is also one of the pedagogical elements highly supported throughout this study and other relevant literature, including Thomas and Munge (2017), who state that "outdoor fieldwork may still be considered as the

signature pedagogy for emerging outdoor/environmental education professionals because of the pivotal role it plays in their induction into the profession" (p. 8).

The personal cost of a student's study and future career choices impacts their professional identity development. The time required to cultivate personal and professional identities is finite. It requires consideration of both lifestyle and future-oriented priorities that can challenge and influence professional identity, particularly if personal identity development is over-prioritised as an element in their identity formation (Manzi & Benet-Martinez, 2022). Managing this challenge requires that course design incorporates an innovative curriculum that considers concepts and pedagogical impacts. These innovations must account for factors such as time spent engaged in field-based learning, equipment cost, and other associated costs, as well as students' capacity to obtain regular work to support their studies.

Employment roles in the outdoor industry can expose employees to impacts related to personal costs. Institutional comprehension of (and responses to) this personal cost throughout the students' university studies can help facilitate a mature and resilient professional identity. This process will benefit the students as graduates because they will be better able to manage these personal costs arising from professional requirements.

Recommendations for Research

This study has identified a paucity of research in the outdoor leadership domain that specifically addresses professional identity development. The following section will present recommendations for research that can serve to develop discipline-based literature in this conceptual space. These recommendations will further guide and generate research to explore and extend the concepts considered in this current study.

Investigate the Australian Outdoor Industries' Capacity for Further Professionalisation Structures to Support Professional Identity Development

Currently, the Australian Outdoor Industry lacks structures to advance its professionalisation status. Research by Martin (2000) highlighted five 'pillars' to professionalisation, and Polley (2021) argued that the Australian Outdoor Industry is well advanced in two of the five pillars. Other work by Potter and Dyment (2016) highlighted a lack of a strategic and systematic approach to promoting professionalism in the industry.

Addressing these challenges could occur through research investigating the desire of the Australian Outdoor Industry to implement structures that can support the advancement and recognition of the profession. Lifting the industry's status in Australia would support professional identity development for university outdoor leadership students.

The research should be quantitative, utilising a survey tool constructed and distributed to stakeholders across the industry. The stakeholders would include individual employers and employer groups, state and national peak bodies, and individuals considered employees (e.g., freelance, contract, casual, and full-time). This survey would collect data about current perspectives on professionalisation in the industry and expectations of change in professional status. The survey would seek to identify structures or strategies that could be implemented to move the industry towards the required professionalisation level. Representation in the data should be sourced from all Australian states so that this research can have a national impact. The appropriate sample size should be approximately 15 - 20% of all outdoor activity providers, 25 – 30% of all training and education providers, and approximately 200 -

300 individual industry employees. Distribution of this survey could occur with the assistance of state and national peak bodies.

The study would incorporate literature from the teaching and nursing disciplines due to both disciplines previously seeking to improve the public standing of their profession. This research should undergo further review to identify existing tools used to conceptualise and collect quantitative data on professional identity and how to analyse the resultant data.

This investigation will provide a valuable data set that peak bodies and government stakeholders can use to lobby the government for further funding, attention, and support. Outcomes leading to increased attention and support can help make the identified changes to improve the professional standing of the Australian Outdoor Industry. As previously stated, this improvement can only support the professional identity development of university outdoor leadership students.

Investigate Existing Social Perceptions of the Outdoor Industry

This study has indicated that, currently, the outdoor industry struggles for recognition as a profession in Australia. Given that Mann (2002) discussed the industry's professionalisation two decades prior to this research, it is disappointing that the outdoor industry has made little progress towards professionalisation in the last two decades. This lack of progress highlights the need for the outdoor industry to look externally at broader society, to understand how outdoor industry professionals are seen or perceived before they can look internally and create changes to the current systems and structures. Therefore, we need future research to investigate social perceptions of the outdoor industry and outdoor professionals. The outcomes of this research could provide data to reveal the 'reality' of how people 'outside' view the

industry and the outdoor professional. This information could help address existing issues surrounding professionalisation and better support the professional identity development of stakeholders.

In a mixed methods approach, the research could gather quantitative and qualitative data through participant surveys and focus groups. The surveys could establish a set of metrics identifying how a cross-section of society views and perceives the outdoor industry and professionals. The sample size for these surveys would be 100 – 150 selected participants. Participants will be recruited from community members without affiliation with the outdoor industry. The baseline data generated from these surveys could then guide the interview structure to be used in qualitative focus groups, with the second group of participants further representing a cross-section of society. The focus group participants could be selected through a probability-based sampling process from the cluster of survey participants. The focus groups would be semi-structured, with a series of predetermined questions and the opportunity for participants to voice their opinions or thoughts outside the structured questions.

Outcomes from the research would inform the industry about how it is perceived by broader society. This new knowledge would provide impetus to establish strategic responses to shift perceptions to become more favourable toward the industry and the industry's professionalisation attempts. The research outputs would also provide stakeholders, including peak bodies and federal government departments, with an understanding of what assistance and structures are required to support improvements to the industry's professional standing.

National and International Study Regarding the Professional Identity Development of University Outdoor Leadership Students

As indicated in Chapter 2, research regularly reports on the development of outdoor leaders' professional practice (Drury et al., 2005; Kosseff, 2012; Martin et al., 2017; Priest & Gass, 2018; Prince, 2021; Seaman & Coppens, 2006). There are also references to professionalisation and the profession (Dyment & Potter, 2015; Mann, 2002; Martin, 2000; Polley, 2021; Potter & Dyment, 2016; Thomas, 2001). However, a paucity of outdoor leadership literature directly and explicitly details the critical elements of professional identity development. Hence, a study is needed to utilise literature from ideologically aligned disciplines and bodies of knowledge, such as teaching and healthcare.

Further research is required to fill this knowledge gap. Specifically, this study's methodology should be expanded to a national or international scale, depending on the resources available for the research. The longitudinal case study process showed that tracking university students over three years of their degree was required for a thorough investigation of their professional identity development. The use of a qualitative, semi-structured interview design should also be duplicated. Although a single qualitative interview or a single quantitative survey could create a data point in an individual's professional identity development, it may not illuminate the developmental processes and challenges as rigorously as a longitudinal case study with semi-structured interviews.

The sample size for the current investigation was reduced by approximately 40% across the data collection period. This phenomenon would be expected to occur in other universities invited to be part of the larger study. Therefore, a sample size of 25 – 30 students from each institution at the commencement of the study would be

required. The number of institutions participating will depend on the resources available to the researcher or research team. It is recommended that each participating university needs at least one staff member to be involved in the data collection, analysis, and evaluation. The semi-structured interviews will produce considerable data that must be thematically analysed and aggregated.

The outcomes of this research would enable comparisons between the participating institutions. These differences would reflect the different social milieu in which the institutions operate, the different operational levels of support provided for course delivery, the variations in curricula associated with the courses and how these factors impact the distinct professional identity development that occurs for the students participating in the study. Outputs available after the research will help inform curriculum development, provide data to stakeholders, and encourage supplemental institutional support for course delivery to enable better professional identity development outcomes for university outdoor leadership students.

Explore Links Between Curriculum Content, Professional Practice, and Professional Identity Development

This study began to explore the linkages between the university course curriculum and how this relates to students' professional identity development and, as a by-product, their professional practice. Preparing graduates for the workforce and the demands of employers is essential work for universities (Snell et al., 2020). A large section of Chapter 5 investigated several prominent enablers and inhibitors of the participants' professional identity development and the impacts on their preparation for future employment. This initial exploration has highlighted the importance of course curriculum development occurring in a manner that ensures professional practice

requirements are confirmed (with industry input), and a focus on the student's professional identity development is paramount to the curriculum design.

Future research could further explore the nexus of curriculum design, professional practice, and identity. A quasi-experimental curriculum intervention could be conducted across two universities delivering outdoor leadership courses. Surveying both cohorts, pre- and post-intervention, would enable the identification of changes and development in professional identity. This research would need to utilise three distinct phases:

1. A qualitative focus group study to identify the enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development. The focus group data will provide information for the development of the curriculum intervention. The sample group for this focus group could be a selection of graduated outdoor leadership students from the participant universities. The sample group would be able to provide perspectives on the applicability of the knowledge and skills developed through their courses to the range of employment roles they fill in the industry. This perspective would highlight aspects of the interrelatedness of curriculum, practice and identity in university outdoor leadership degrees and the enablers and inhibitors identified within their experience.

2. A quasi-experimental curriculum-based intervention. This experiment would have one university cohort of students as a control group. The participants would undertake their course curriculum without any changes. The second university student cohort would be exposed to a specific curriculum intervention designed to enable the development of their professional identity. Based on the enablers and inhibitors identified in the initial data collection survey, the intervention would incorporate a specifically developed unit of study that the experimental cohort would complete.

3. Pre- and post-experiment surveys. Both the control and experimental student cohorts would complete these surveys. The survey instrument could be based on previous work by Gracia et al. (2021), with a contextual modification to the survey tool developed in their research allowing for pre- and post-intervention surveys. Completing these surveys would provide data from the control and experimental groups, which would be interrogated (via a comparative analysis of the pre and post-survey results) to identify if there are differences in professional identity development across both cohorts.

The resultant outcomes of this research would help university-based curriculum designers prepare and implement a curriculum that acknowledges the intersectionality of professional practice and professional identity. This curriculum should be informed by a diverse range of stakeholders supporting the correct level of student knowledge and skill learning outcomes, allowing students to graduate and fill various employment roles in the outdoor industry. Research by Wong and Trollope-Kumar (2014) acknowledged this developmental capacity: "students in our study often refer to its importance [curriculum] in preparing them for their professional roles" (p. 48). The research outcomes would further explore the range of enablers and inhibitors to professional identity development in curriculum design that would support the student's capacity to pursue a long and sustainable career as an outdoor leader.

Expose the 'Fieldwork Conundrum' and why Universities are Challenged by Fieldwork and Field-Based Teaching

On several occasions during this study, the challenge regarding the provision of fieldwork or field-based teaching for university outdoor leadership students has been discussed. The outdoor literature details that this challenge is rooted in the

ongoing reduction of higher education funding. This neoliberal reductionist process forces universities to prioritise courses that provide the greatest financial return to the institution (Parker et al., 2021) rather than those courses that provide the best learning outcomes and graduate employability. Often, this approach means that courses that maximise 'bums on seats' and have low delivery costs are preferred over courses with small enrolment cohorts and higher delivery costs, regardless of their learning and graduate outcomes.

Outdoor leadership courses, by nature, must take students off campus to gain skills and knowledge in the appropriate context; this pedagogy is crucial for their professional identity development. Snell et al. (2020) advised that learning should take place where the knowledge will be best utilised, processed and retained. Consequently, further research is required to explore university operational constraints for delivering field-based teaching in outdoor leadership degrees. This research should investigate university financial and operational structures and whether they are applied equitably across all courses despite differing delivery costs. Evaluation of the industrial employment structures for staff employment is needed to ascertain whether universities expose staff engaged in field-based teaching to unacceptable health and safety risks through excessive workloads. These potential risks can ultimately compromise student learning outcomes and professional identity development.

The research sample could involve a range of universities that deliver outdoor leadership degrees. These universities could be across state, national, or international locations, depending on the resources available for the research. It may be challenging to find support from institutions unless anonymity is guaranteed because the research would require sensitive financial information to be collected and reviewed.

A review of various diverse courses from each institution could be explored to look for financial inequities. These outcomes could then be compared across institutions to understand the economic operating environment in which outdoor leadership courses must operate and deliver field-based teaching. A qualitative set of interviews could be undertaken with a range of senior executive university staff to uncover their perceptions surrounding field teaching pedagogy and its importance in the strategic direction of their institutions.

Conducting qualitative focus groups with academic staff engaged in teaching outdoor leadership courses could help uncover their assumptions about institutional constraints for field-based teaching. The data from these focus groups could then be reviewed with the senior executive staff to align assumptions. The academic staff could also scrutinise current field teaching paradigms for innovative delivery options to achieve the required learning outcomes that still align with university financial and operational performance indicators.

The outcomes of this research will provide additional insights into the challenges of delivering field teaching for outdoor leadership students within contemporary university operational structures. It could identify constrained applications of financial structures that impact the delivery of field teaching outcomes. The research could support senior university executives in understanding the benefit of offering university course options that deliver high levels of student satisfaction and graduate employability. It could also assist current academic staff by improving their understanding of their operating environment and how to deliver innovative field-based teaching that meets university operational requirements and student learning outcomes. The research findings could also support the delivery of field-based

teaching critical to outdoor leadership students' professional identity development by clarifying the perspectives and assumptions of all stakeholders.

Limitations of the Research

All research is subject to limitations. The researcher in this study is a university academic and a member of the outdoor industry and would be considered an outdoor professional. Therefore, the work in this study will be informed by an inherently positive inclination towards the importance of outdoor leadership as a career, field of study, and discrete discipline. This positive inclination may have resulted in an unintentional bias regarding the data interpretation.

As an academic employed by the university involved in the research, the researcher will have preconceived perceptions of the operationalisation challenges involved in delivering the outdoor leadership course under study. These preconceived perceptions could also result in an unintentional bias in the data interpretation.

The study participants decreased from 25 students in the initial selection to 11 by the final interview round. This attrition throughout the research presented a potential limitation, even though this was expected and supported by Moerbeek (2022), who detailed that attrition is the rule rather than the exception in longitudinal studies. This attrition reduced the interview data available for the study and the volume of student responses from which the researcher could substantiate themes for analysis. This reduction could potentially decrease the efficacy and trustworthiness of the study's thematic analysis.

Baxter and Jack (2008) and Flick (2011) identified the use of a case study in this context as a robust research approach that can help explore concepts surrounding professional practice and identity. However, case studies can also have research

limitations. As this case study was restricted to one university, the study participants' interview responses were only pertinent to one context. The resultant data did not contain responses from different curriculum delivery models or from other universities that may have a different approach to pedagogy and course cultures. These characteristics restricted the depth and generalisability of the data analysed and discussed.

Summary and Conclusion

This research has investigated the developing professional identity of university outdoor leadership students. This study identified that minimal outdoor leadership literature directly addresses professional identity development. More specifically, a lack of existing literature regarding university outdoor leadership students' professional identity development reinforces the relevance and importance of the topic as a basis for the current thesis. Building on literature from ideologically aligned disciplines, such as teaching and health care, a study of how university outdoor leadership students develop professional identity was undertaken to contribute to filling the existing gap in the outdoor leadership discipline-specific literature. Integrating information from these aligned discipline areas and the findings from the current study has resulted in the formulation of new knowledge. This renewed evidence base will benefit university outdoor leadership students and the entire outdoor leadership industry surrounding this professional need.

This research used semi-structured interviews to capture the lived experience of university outdoor leadership students over a three-year timeframe. The collected data expressed the participants' perceptions, impressions, and experiences relating to their professional identity development. The participants generated data that

revealed their understanding of professional identity and the elements that helped develop or hindered their development. The dialogue collected from the participants presented broad perspectives on the impact that family, friends, and society have on their developing professional identity and the role of the course curriculum in their development. The study also considered many internal and external conceptualisations the students held regarding the industry, the role of professionals, and their future careers.

Overall, the information presented in this thesis utilises collected data that allowed for reflection on the many interactions, dynamics, and influencing factors illuminated through the responses provided by the study participants. The design adopted in this study was evidence-based, founded in academic thought and discourse, and supported the realisation of the initial research aims. These methodological elements supported the findings' trustworthiness, rigour, and quality in addressing the original research aims.

A key strength of this research was the longitudinal nature of the data collection. When attempting to measure any human qualitative development, it is less valuable to capture data only at a single point in time (e.g., the end of the developmental period). This type of data collection relies on the potentially distant memories of the participants and, therefore, may inaccurately record their situational and circumstantial recollections. Ongoing data generation over the developmental period provides an opportunity for more accurate data collection. It allows the participants to provide precise detail regarding their narrative as it constitutes a more recent set of memories. Therefore, the longitudinal design methodology utilised in this study supports the reliability and validity of the collected data in providing information regarding the development of the study participants.

Incorporating a case study in this study allowed a direct focus on the data collected. A case study approach is an appropriate research method when questions regarding 'how' and 'why' need to be explored and answered. As this study was considering 'how' university outdoor leadership students develop a professional identity and 'why' they had the experiences they did throughout their course delivery, the use of a case study as a unit of analysis supported the goal of addressing the research aims. Using an iterative process to analyse interview data and construct the subsequent interview guides for the case study facilitated the researcher in addressing specific elements of the participants' responses. This approach to analysing the responses was required to highlight data reflective of contextually appropriate themes.

The resultant data from the semi-structured interviews were thematically analysed to provide a structure to the data set so that relationships and connections could undergo exploration. This structuring and analysis generated the five main themes reported in the results chapter. Theme 1 considered the ongoing debate that the participants expressed regarding the importance or priority of qualifications versus experience for establishing the validity of an individual's capacity in the outdoor industry. The theme represented the interplay that this clash of qualifications versus experience creates when an emerging professional attempts to develop their professional identity. Theme 2 incorporated a large portion of the collected data and explored the link between outdoor leadership experience and professional identity. This theme was largely introspective, with the collated data requiring the participants to define and describe relevant concepts, consider the university's professional context, and express their thoughts about their future careers in the outdoor industry. Elements within this theme expressed the participants' knowledge, understanding and perception of identity and professional identity, their reasons for enrolling in the course,

and concepts relating to their emotional connection to the outdoors, their course, and their future profession.

Theme 3 presented participants' perceptions of the features within their course delivery and related lived experiences that they believed inhibited or enabled the development of their professional identity. Participants discussed developmental curriculum experiences across their studies and the impact these experiences had on knowledge and skill development. Further responses regarding the interrelationship between knowledge and skill-based curriculum experiences and developing professional identity were also considered within this theme. Theme 4 was an outward-looking theme based on the resultant data. This theme considered the role that family, friends and society had on the participants' developing professional identities. The public perception of the work carried out by individuals in the outdoor industry was explored. Consideration of the challenges the participants documented in dealing with social perceptions of the outdoor industry, the outdoor professional, and the intersection of these perceptions with the impact on their professional identity development were prominent insights within this theme. Participant explanations provided directly to their familial and social networks regarding course choice and future careers were explored. The effect and influence of these interactions on the participants' professional identity development were apparent in the thematic analysis.

The final theme generated through the thematic analysis investigated the effects peer relationships and role modelling had on the participants' professional identity development. The role of the developing relationships with their fellow students, the relationships they developed with the teaching staff, and the influence of role modelling across their course were identified as supporting their professional identity development.

Exploration of the themes allowed the researcher to fully understand the extent of the professional identity development concepts and perceptions as presented by the study participants. The interrogation of the thematic analysis also ensured that the discussion provided in Chapter 5 could fully encapsulate the elements and ideas pertinent to addressing the study's research aims. This investigation considered the role of family and friends and engagement in the outdoors. It highlighted how pre-university experiences in the outdoors supported and positively influenced professional identity development and may assist with identity conceptualisation in the early stages of the course delivery. However, based on the participant's responses, these pre-university experiences were not essential for students to develop a strong professional identity during their university studies. A well-structured, intentional, and thoughtful curriculum can still achieve this outcome.

The positive support from family and friends regarding course choice and future career choice was seen as important by the study participants. They acknowledged that support from these relationships enabled validation of their choices. However, once again, the participants indicated that this type of support, although helpful and positive, was not crucial for them to develop a maturing professional identity throughout their course. The findings showed that participants struggled with conceptualising professional identity because they rarely considered it in the context of their career choice or in relation to broader concepts of their own identity. This outcome highlights that if students struggle to understand the concept of professional identity, it will be difficult to develop their professional identity intentionally and purposefully. This finding reinforces the need for course curriculum designers to provide opportunities for students to have early exposure to these concepts and ongoing access across their program engagement.

The discussion chapter and study participant responses emphasised the ability and need to explain course and career choices using the correct nomenclature and industry-based language. Study participants indicated that expressing themselves correctly and communicating their professional value to others validated their choices and strengthened their professional identity. Validation from external sources was a central concept in the participants' responses. The expression of this validation sentiment signals the need for university outdoor leadership students to develop the capacity to use suitable industry-based language and nomenclature accurately and contextually when communicating with other people about their course choices and future professional career. Communicating with others at this level will stimulate more favourable responses and assist students in validating their choices and refine their professional identity.

Chapter 5 discussed the findings relating to research aim 2, specifically the participants' perceptions of the outdoor leadership profession and the roles of outdoor leadership professionals. Participants clearly acknowledged that practical experience is vital to developing professional identity, and they identified the need for practical experience during course delivery in this regard. This acknowledgement and expressed need was consistent with the work of Potter et al. (2012a), who proposed that the nature of outdoor leadership and outdoor education "demands practical activity in nature-based settings" (p. 101). Due to the wide scope of skills and capacities required to be employable in the outdoor industry, study participants reiterated that practical experiences would allow them to develop strong workforce competencies. Addressing this perception surrounding future employability through engaging in industry-appropriate levels of practical experience within the course was an essential curriculum element for developing participants' professional identity.

The requirement for practical experience was evident in findings concerning the nexus of practical experiences combined with theoretical knowledge. This combination of the 'applied and the conceptual' supports and validates the study participants' professional identity development. Stakeholders' stereotypical perceptions of outdoor leadership acknowledge high levels of practical skill-based activity in the workplace. However, the study participants challenged this perception by reporting the importance of including theoretical knowledge to complement their practical experience. Combining these cognate concepts aligns with industry requirements that employees possess the skills and knowledge required for their roles (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). Previous research also reinforces the need for higher level thinking, experiential processing, and affective ability (Baker & O'Brien, 2020) for outdoor leaders to take greater responsibility and seniority in the industry. Therefore, both practical and theoretical learning opportunities must be structured into university outdoor leadership courses for students to develop a robust and mature professional identity.

Findings regarding the study participants' perceptions of the outdoor leadership profession align with Guthrie (2001), who argued that society struggles with the outdoor industry and validating the outdoor professional. It was evident that if society struggles to validate a student's professional identity, the student will, in turn, struggle to validate their professional identity. Consequently, students must be equipped with strategies for self-validation to support their professional identity development independent of external validation.

Research aim 3, directly addressed how the participants' perceptions of the profession and roles of outdoor professionals relate to their professional identity development. The findings reinforced that the students recognised the complexity of the role of an outdoor professional and supported the findings in discipline-based

literature regarding this complexity (Baker & O'Brien, 2020; Martin et al., 2017; Munge & Thomas, 2021). The study participants acknowledged the breadth of skills, knowledge, and abilities they had acquired during their studies, with knowledge and capacity in risk management and safety most prominent in their listings of the main role of an outdoor leader. The second most frequently identified concept is outdoor leaders' capacity to facilitate client outcomes. Participants understood that growing and mastering their knowledge and capacity of these features was necessary for their professional identity development and for acknowledgement as outdoor professionals.

Findings regarding the study participants' perceptions of the qualities required by outdoor leaders showed that they identified the attributes required to validate their roles as outdoor leaders. These qualities can develop throughout their degree studies, and play a role in building their professional identity (e.g. mastery of skills, industry-based knowledge, tertiary qualifications). On this basis, the educational curriculum for outdoor leadership courses should also provide opportunities to develop the breadth of necessary characteristics identified by industry.

The links between professional practice and professional identity also featured significantly in this study and aligned with research aim 4. Concepts surrounding the multiple identities of outdoor leaders were acknowledged by participants as competing narratives and discourses regarding university study and professional work. Findings regarding these concepts supported curriculum-based outcomes focussing on ensuring students are aware of the professional context of their university study and how it links to their professional practice. As a consequence, the alignment of industry and university discourses is vital to minimise identity development confusion for students.

A part of the critical focus on research aim 5, this study explored a range of enablers and inhibitors of professional identity development. The enablers of professional identity development were found to include the mix of theory and practical learning in the curriculum, the capacity within learning experiences for direct feedback, and the effect of role modelling throughout course delivery. Additional enablers were internal to the student, such as the emotional connection they felt to their course, fellow students, and their future careers, and the enabling influence that both internal and external validation has on their conceptualisation of professional identity. Given that participants indicated the positive influence of these enablers on their developing professional identity, curriculum delivery should foreground these enablers and prioritise them in future curriculum development. The value added to the students' lived experience and university narrative through the curriculum focus on enablers will support students' professional identity development opportunities.

The inhibitors to professional identity development discussed in this study also consisted of internally and externally located factors. A foundational inhibitor was the participants' limited understanding of professional identity. The impact of public perception and role confusion experienced by participants also inhibited their professional identity development. A lack of congruence between university-based and industry-based professional experience was also considered an inhibitor. This study also revealed the personal cost of studying to become an outdoor leader as an inhibitor. Overall, these inhibitors negatively impacted the study participants' professional identity development, and attempts to remove these factors from the curriculum or students lived experience should be addressed. Acknowledging these inhibitors within the creation of curriculum-based outcomes could resolve detrimental

associations and provide beneficial professional identity development outcomes for students.

For university graduates moving into the outdoor industry, having a well-developed and maturing professional identity has received recognition throughout this study as essential to developing a long-term and sustainable career. The need for a robust and maturing professional identity is relevant for individuals who work in an industry that does not receive high levels of professional validation from general society. Furthermore, these individuals must foster strong internal validation processes of concepts such as professional identity to support their professional decisions.

By providing a breadth of relevant and current information in the outdoor leadership domain, subsequent consideration and integration of the findings of this thesis will support students to graduate with a maturing and robust professional identity. In an applied context, the research findings will support university outdoor leadership students transitioning into the industry and facilitate career fulfilment by providing the community with opportunities to engage in beneficial, enriching, and safe outdoor and nature-based experiences.

Martin et al. (2017) previously explored the criticality of the role of the outdoor leader, stating that "being an outdoor professional requires knowledge of the field, a philosophy and vision for the profession, an ethical disposition, and an acknowledgement of the inherent emotional and physical risks of working with people in the outdoors" (p.51). The study's findings reinforce that university outdoor leadership students must have a well-developed conceptualisation of their professional identity. This will not only support a sustainable and fulfilling career in the outdoors but also support the outdoor industry's development of a professional identity

when the validation and value of both the outdoor professional and industry is challenged. The intertwined development between the outdoor leader and the outdoor industry's professional identities is a symbiotic process. This connection is required to maintain and develop the ongoing provision of experiences within society that support and encourage a better relationship with our planet. Fostering this symbiotic relationship and sustaining this positive societal representation is more achievable when outdoor leaders have a mature and robust professional identity.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study titled:

"All you do is have fun" – Investigating the developing professional identity of Tertiary Outdoor Leadership students.…

The aims of the research are as follows:

- To investigate the development of professional identity in tertiary outdoor leadership students;
- To explore how tertiary students entering courses preparing them for the outdoor profession perceive the outdoor profession and the outdoor professional;
- To investigate how this perception relates to their initial professional identity;
- Examine how this perception changes over the duration of their course;
- To scrutinise the enablers and inhibitors that influence this change;
- To develop a framework for understanding the professional identity of the outdoor professional;
- To build new knowledge surrounding successful course design and delivery of tertiary outdoor leadership programs;
- To add to the collective knowledge surrounding the development of professional identity for Outdoor Leadership Professionals;
- To create new knowledge to assist in ensuring that tertiary outdoor leadership graduates meet industry expectations and can enhance the development, sustainability and validity of the outdoor profession.

**CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT - - - - - -   I,
………………………………………………….participant's name**

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

"All you do is have fun" – Investigating the developing professional identity of Tertiary Outdoor Leadership students.…being conducted at Victoria University by: Matthew Cox.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Dr. Peter Burridge, and that I freely consent to participate in the below-mentioned procedures for data collection:

Tool	Time Commitment
Beginning of First Year – February/March 2013 - Online Survey	Approximately 20 mins for the survey.
Start of first year interview – February/March 2013	Approx. 30 - 45 mins for the interview.
End of first year interview – November 2013	Approx. 30 - 45 mins for the interview.
End of second year interview – November 2014	Approx. 30 - 45 mins for the interview.
End of third year interview – November 2015	Approx. 30 - 45 mins for the interview.
Exit Interview (if leaving the course)	Approx. 30 - 45 mins for the interview.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential and should the need arise I will have access to a Victoria University Counsellor

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher, who, in this instance is… Matthew Cox
Phone +61 3 919 9528 / 0421 671 296
If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **"All you do is have fun" – Investigating the developing professional identity of Tertiary Outdoor Leadership students.**

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Matthew Cox as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr. Caroline Symons and Dr. Peter Burridge from the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development.

Project explanation

This research project is focussed on investigating how tertiary students studying a degree in outdoor leadership develop their professional identity. There is not a lot of current knowledge surrounding the development of professional identity for outdoor leadership professionals and what knowledge there is focuses on the desired end outcomes of professional practice (which is how you do what you do). However, this knowledge does not address the changing perceptions of outdoor professionals in training and throughout their development. This research will identify and explore what helps or hinders Tertiary Outdoor Leadership students' developing perceptions of professional identity. The project will follow the educational experience of 25 Outdoor Leadership students through their degree, and it will focus on how these emerging outdoor leadership professionals perceive and make meaning of their professional identity in light of their current knowledge and the knowledge they develop. The research approach will be a case study of these students' experience as they progress through their studies over their first three years. This research will provide new insights into the role of professional identity formation in emerging outdoor leaders. These insights will help inform the development of effective tertiary outdoor leadership courses and industry mentoring approaches for graduate outdoor leaders.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an initial online survey concerning your past outdoor experiences and your current perceptions of outdoor leaders and what it means to be an outdoor professional. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes. You will then participate in four separate interviews over the duration of your degree. These interviews will be at the start and end of your first year and at the end of your second and third year of your degree. These interviews will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes each interview. In these interviews you will be asked a series of questions regarding your developing professional identity as an outdoor leader and its relation to the outdoor industry. If you should choose to leave the degree at any stage during

the research project you will also be asked to participate in an "exit" interview of approximately 30 – 45 minutes. There is also an observation phase involved in this research were you will be observed participating in some of the field experiences that are an integral part of your course. For these observations you will not be required to do anything over and above the standard level of participation in the field experiences.

The total time commitment over three years is approximately four hours.

What will I gain from participating?

You will have the opportunity to talk about your experiences over the duration of your degree and reflect on their importance your development as an outdoor leader. Your opinion is valued by the researcher and you will have the satisfaction that you have helped increase our understanding of the development of professional identity in outdoor leaders.

How will the information I give be used?

This research is significant and important as it will provide a deeper understanding of the professional identity of emerging outdoor professionals within the tertiary education context, as well as a deeper understanding of the influences that develop professional identity in this context. This new knowledge will enable course providers to design and structure courses in a way that assists the engagement and retention of students, thus satisfying a number of university level imperatives while at the same time ensuring industry expectations are met and graduates will be produced who can enhance the development, growth and validity of the outdoor profession.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

Participants through the survey and interview process may question their decision making process for their tertiary course selection and ensuing appropriateness as an outdoor professional within the outdoor industry. Should this becoming distressing the interview will be stopped and if required you will have the opportunity to speak with a Victoria University student counsellor. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. Be assured that the data collected will be kept confidential and will be destroyed five years after publication of the associated thesis. This research is focused on the development of your professional identity and is not linked to the learning tasks or assessment tasks you may complete during classes.

How will this project be conducted?

Information will be collected through the survey, interview and observation processes. The survey will be conducted online and the interviews will be at the start and end of your first year and at the end of your second and third year of your degree. If you should choose to leave the degree at any stage during the research project you will also be asked to participate in an "exit" interview. There will also be an observation phase involved in this research were you will be observed participating in some of the field experiences that are an integral part of your course.

Who is conducting the study?

Chief Investigator:

Dr. Caroline Symons
Caroline.symons@vu.edu.au
Ph. 99194389

Student Investigator:

Matthew Cox
Matthew.cox@vu.edu.au
Ph. 0421 671 296

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

Initial Demographic Characteristics Interview - Question 9. – Full Data Set

Table 23.

Interview Question 9. – Full Data Set

What are 4 key pieces of information you currently know about working in the outdoor industry?

Student	1	2	3	4
1	Outdoor experiences can occur in nice sunny weather or in a thunderstorm and rain	Leaders must always carry excess gear to cater for any potential incidents	Outdoor Leaders must make people feel comfortable in their surroundings	The outdoor industry can be expensive in terms of acquiring the necessary gear
2	There is a Duty of Care we must follow	Complete as many qualifications and short courses as possible to become more employable	There is a wide range of outdoor jobs and companies	The outdoor industry is worldwide
3	It is dangerous if you don't know what you are doing	Long hours		
4	it is a small industry	you need to gain credibility with contacts	Don't burn your bridges with industry professionals	there is a theory for everything you do in the outdoors
5	there are hundreds of different jobs and opportunities all over the world	you need to regularly update your qualifications	it can be a demanding lifestyle	you need to be able to adapt to different situations
6	It's a lifestyle not a job	It requires a lot of organisation	Experience is important	Open-mindedness helps
7	safety	leadership	respect	prepared

Table 23. Continued

Stu	1	2	3	4
8	how ecosystems work together	preservation of environments	learning from mistakes made in the past	knowing extensive information in adventure activities
9	expect the unexpected	prepare for any situation	notify someone what your doing	most of all have fun and spread the enjoyment throughout the community
10	Requires preparation and planning	Requires skills in recreation activities	Patience	Empathy
11	It's always changing	It's always challenging	It's adaptive	It's exciting.
12	There is a wide variety of skills and knowledge that is required	A qualification/accreditation is required to work in Australia		
13	Hard industry to work in, not many jobs	First aid is essential	Knowing the land	knowing how to navigate
14	Many different activities to be involved with	Lots of fun. Rewarding	It can take you to different places	Different levels eg. Teaching/instruction, management, organisation, OH&S
15	can be risky	rewarding	enjoyable	demanding
16	there are many dangers involved with guiding/teaching people in the outdoors	good group morale is vital for activities to run smoothly	as the leader, you have a duty of care	it is important that everyone feels safe and is having fun

answered question	16
skipped question	6

Appendix D

Initial Demographic Characteristics Interview - Question 10. – Full Data Set

Table 24.

Interview Question 10. – Full Data Set

What do you think it means to be a professional?

Student	Response
1	A professional is someone who has lots of experience in the outdoors and they must have a variety of skills needed to survive in the outdoors and they must be able to provide a safe shelter for people with less experience in the outdoors.
2	Have accredited knowledge and experience. Be good at what you do and follow rules and regulations. Have professional relationships with your employees and customers.
3	To adhere and operate to the expected standards of practice, ethical codes and skill levels. Being prepared for the activities planned and any hazards that may inhibit your performance to miniise the risks involved.
4	to hold a specific set of standards relating to the industry, and be able to become an independent professional with your own credibility
5	to be a professional is to conduct yourself in a respectful manner to teach and lead by example. you must have knowledge and experience and being willing to help others
6	A professional is someone who is competent and skill-full in their chosen field. They work to Australian standards and work in the Outdoor Industry.
7	to be in a job that is paid well and can take you everywhere around the world

Table 24. Continued

Student	Response
8	to be able to do something so well that it isnt and worry for you and you have a full understanding of what your doing.
9	Best of the best at a expertise
10	Being responsible and organised when required.
11	Being professional.. Means always striving to do the best job you can do, being honest, trustworthy and true to your word and to the people you work with/for.
12	To always present yourself appropriately and to be ethical in your work practises.
13	Being an expert in your filed of work it also means being competent and skilful, behaving in an ethical way. Acting in the best interests of the public or society.
14	To give everything to what you believe in a respectable matter.
15	I think it means to educate children in a manor that they can both experience new things and learn and get a message across that children should be outdoors more
answered question	15
skipped question	7

Appendix E

Interview Guide for Interview 1

Semi-Structured Interview Guide
Interview 2013

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Information statement to participants before starting:

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know these interviews form part of the data collection for my PhD research and the information that you supply is valued and your time is respected and appreciated. The information that you provide will be used in the production of my thesis and will also play an important part in helping further develop the curriculum of your course in the future.

I would like to remind you that the information retrieved from this interview will be kept confidential and nobody will be named personally. I will ensure all responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with research team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. I will be taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we don't miss your comments.

If at any time during the interview, you feel like you do not want to proceed or answer any questions, please let me know and we will stop. I'm estimating that the interview should last about 30 minutes, so if you would like a break, please let me know. During the interview I will ask a series of questions. Please take your time, have a think about the question and be honest. Remember, your name will not be attached to the comment in anyway.

Do you have any questions or would you like me to explain anything before we begin?

Before we get started could you please say your name one at a time so I can identify who is speaking on the tape? Thank you.

Great let's get started then…

First I would like to chat to you about your outdoor experiences and why you enrolled in the course

1. What outdoor activities have you previously participated in?

2. What were some of the memorable experiences you had during these activities?

   a. Why were these important to you?

3. Who did you participate in these activities with?

4. Did you do outdoor education at school?

   a. Yes – what were some of your experiences that you remember (positive/negative)

   b. No – what generated your interest in the outdoors?

5. Why did you choose to enrol in this degree program?

6. Have you thought about what you are going to do when you complete the course? What are your plans at this stage?

7. How do you explain what you are studying and what you do in your degree to your family? Examples?

8. How do you explain what you are studying and what you do in your degree to your friends? Examples?

9. What does your family think/say about what you are doing at university? Examples?

10. What do your friends think/say about what you are doing at university? Examples?

11. How would your friends and family describe or define you:
    a. Personally;

    b. Professionally.

I am also interested in what you think about different professions and what it means to be a professional say compared with a trades person or general worker?

12. Can you give me some examples of what you think is a:
    a. unskilled job; (U)
    b. semi-skilled job; (SS)
    c. skilled job ; (S)
    d. Professional job. (P)
    e. What category would you put the following people into: nurse;
    f. teacher;
    g. computer technician;
    h. guy that fixes photocopiers;
    i. mechanic;
    j. doctor GP;
    k. medical specialist ;
    l. cabinet maker;
    m. AFL footballer;
    n. franchise owner;
    o. brickies labourer;
    p. Cash register operator;
    q. Human Resource manager

r. artist

- <u>For some of them ask why would you did you categorise this job as skilled, etc?</u>
- <u>Then ask would you call this person a professional?</u>
- <u>Once you have done a number of these I would then ask</u>

13. How would you categorise an outdoor leader unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled? Why?

   a. Would you call these people a professional? Why?

<u>Now I would like to talk about your thoughts on outdoor leaders and the course</u>

14. Think back to before starting the course. What you sort of work and responsibilities did you think involved people who lead outdoor trips? - **you may wish to explore this getting them to give examples ask where they drew these ideas from**

15. What do you think is the main job of an outdoor leader?

16. What qualities do you think outdoor leaders need to do their jobs?

17. Can you name the employment opportunities or jobs in the outdoor industry?

18. What experiences in your upcoming course are you most looking forward to?

19. What experiences in your upcoming course do you think you will receive the most learning and benefit from? Please elaborate?

20. Overall, how is the course going and do you think that you will complete your degree?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding questions asked in this interview?

Again I'd like to thank you all for volunteering for this interview. I'll be analysing the information you and others gave me and when completed I'll be happy to send you a copy to review at that time, if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix F

Interview Guide for Interview 2

Semi-Structured Interview Guide
Interview 2014

Name:_____

Date:_____

Time:_____

Information statement to participants before starting:

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know these interviews form part of the data collection for my PhD research and the information that you supply is valued and your time is respected and appreciated. The information that you provide will be used in the production of my thesis and will also play an important part in helping further develop the curriculum of your course in the future.

I would like to remind you that the information retrieved from this interview will be kept confidential and nobody will be named personally. I will be taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments and because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we don't miss your comments.

If at any time during the interview, you feel like you do not want to proceed or answer any questions, please let me know and we will stop. Remember, your name will not be attached to the comment in anyway.

Do you have any questions or would you like me to explain anything before we begin?

Before we get started could you please say your name one at a time so I can identify who is speaking on the tape? Thank you.

Great let's get started then…

1. How has the first year gone?
   a. What have you found to be hard? Was it hard because it was physically difficult or mentally challenging?
   b. What aspects of the course have you found easy? Were these things easy because you learnt them quickly or did not find it demanding?
   c. What event or aspect of the course over first year is most memorable? Why do you think this aspect is so memorable?
   d. What aspects of the course have you found interesting?
   e. What aspects have you found frustrating?

2. Since we last spoke have you thought anymore about what you are going to do when you complete the course? What are your plans at this stage?

3. How do you explain what you are studying and what you do in your degree to your family? Examples?

4. How do you explain what you are studying and what you do in your degree to your friends? Examples?

   a. How would your friends and family describe or define you: Personally;
   b. Professionally.
5. Do you think your peers at uni would define or describe you differently to your friends from outside university? How?

6. What makes someone a professional? Can you describe a professional?

7. What do you think is the main job of an outdoor leader and what qualities do you think outdoor leaders need to do their jobs? What has informed your understanding of outdoor leader's tasks and the qualities they need?

8. What course related experiences are you looking forward to this year? Why are you looking forward to these experiences?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding questions asked in this interview?

Again I'd like to thank you all for volunteering for this interview. I'll be analysing the information you and others gave me and when completed I'll be happy to send you a copy to review at that time, if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix G

Interview Guide for Interview 3

<u>Final Interview -Question development</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

1. Now that you have completed your studies in outdoor recreation/education would you describe yourself as an Outdoor leader?
    a. Yes – how you describe you leadership style or characteristics
    b. No – why not

2. Do you identify with a particular outdoor activity or area of specialist knowledge, i.e. a bushwalker, climber, paddler, skier or maybe a general group leader

3. How do you explain to family or friends what an Outdoor leader/professional is, and what they do?

    Feelings of professionalism

4. Over the past interviews I have asked you to define a person who is classified as a professional. If you had to use 5 words to describe a professional, what would they be?

5. Do you see yourself as a professional?
    a. No- Why not? Do you think this could change?
        i. Yes - What would need to happen for this to change,
    b. Yes – what has happened to make you feel this way
        i. What specific experiences do you think helped you develop these feelings of professionalism?
        ii.
6. What will you do in the future to continue to grow your professional identity as an Outdoor professional?

    Course outcomes

    Now I would like to explore the course and some of the outcomes you think you

    have achieved from the course:

7. What specific skills and knowledge have you gained throughout your course?
8. Are these the skills you expected to develop through the course

a. Yes – What gave you this insight to know what to expect?
b. No – what has been different?

9. Are the skills and knowledge covered during the course those that you think an outdoor leader requires or are some missing or some superfluous?

10. What do you think is the main job/role of an Outdoor Leader?

11. Now that you have finished your degree how do you feel about being a Group leader/ Assistant group leader role? Depending on the answer

12. In what environments/activities would you see yourself as a ……..Why?

13. Has your perception of an "Outdoor Leadership changed since the commencement of the course? Explain

14. Have you changed personally or professionally since over the duration of the course? Explain

Outdoor Leadership and professional identity

You said at the start of the interview that you did / did not feel that you were a professional. I would like to explore your thoughts further about the concept of professionalism and identity

15. You used five words to describe a professional earlier and mentioned the qualities of ……What do you think is more important to develop these professional qualities? Time and experience or qualifications?

16. Do you present yourself differently in personal or professional / work situations?
    a. Yes – do you think you have different identities then, a professional identity and a social identity
        i. What are the differences between these identities and the way that you respond to a situation? For example if you were working as a group leader and a student was upset would you approach the situation differently to a friend who is upset?
    b. No – So you find that you respond and present yourself the same in both settings, can you give me an example?

17. Females – What do you think about women outdoor leaders? How do you feel about the more masculine aspects of being an outdoor professional?

18. Males - What do you think about male outdoor leaders? How do you feel about the more feminine aspects of being an outdoor professional?

19. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding questions asked in this interview?

20. What do you think the general public think about outdoor leadership as a profession?
    a. What impact does this have on your professional identity?
        i. How do you manage these situations?

Appendix H

Thematic Coding Codebook – from NVivo

	NODE LIST
1	**<u>Jobs and Types - classification</u>**
2	**Professional Job**
3	**Unskilled Job**
4	**Unskilled**
5	***Skilled job***
6	**Semi-Skilled job**
7	**<u>Theme 1 - Qualification Vs Experience</u>**
8	**Knowledge V's Credibility**
9	Lack of experience
10	Confusion about what is a professional
11	Qualifications versus experience
12	Need for qualifications to validate professionalism
13	**<u>Theme 2 - Links between Outdoor Leader Experience and Professional Identity</u>**
14	**Definitions**
15	Definition of Outdoor Leader Int 1
16	Defining what they are studying Int 1 and 2
17	Definition of a professional
18	*Definition of a professional Int 1*
19	*Definition of a professional Int 2*
20	Trouble defining what is an outdoor leader or professional and what do they do
21	**Descriptions**
22	Main role of an outdoor leader or professional Int 1, 2 and 3
23	Int 3 Outdoor leader description
24	Changing perception of an outdoor leader Int 3
25	Qualities of an Outdoor Leader Int 1 and 2
26	*Qualities of an outdoor leader Int 1*
27	*Qualities of an outdoor leader Int 2*
28	Int 3 5 words to describe a professional
29	Describes self as a professional
30	Describes self as an outdoor leader
31	**University is or is not a professional context**
32	**Have thought about their future professional career after they graduate**
33	**Identity**
34	Personal identity
35	Professional Identity
36	*Defining factors for professional identity*
37	*Developing professional identity*
38	*Enablers for professional identity development*

39	*Inhibitor for professional identity development*
40	*Sense of professional identity*
41	*Positive professional identity*
42	*Future PD to grow Professional identity*
43	*Does not see self as professional at end of course*
44	Multiple Identities
45	*Masculine v's feminine identities*
46	*Difference in personal and professional identities - multiple identities*
47	*No concept of personal or professional identity*
48	Activity identity and specialisation Int 3
49	**Previous-No previous experiences**
50	Previous experience
51	Previous participation in outdoor activities Int 1
52	Did Oed at School
53	Memorable previous experience
54	No previous outdoor experience
55	No outdoor ed at school
56	**Reason for enrolling in course**
57	**Emotional connection**
58	**Industry Related**
59	Prior understanding of Work and responsibilities of an Outdoor Leader
60	Industry requirements of a professional
61	Lack of industry understanding
62	**Nomenclature**
63	**Theme 3 - Course Curriculum Enablers and Inhibitors**
64	**General curriculum related concepts**
65	Memorable experience from course
66	Interesting course components
67	Course related outcomes
68	Difficult level of academic challenge
69	Curriculum comment
70	Curriculum need for course
71	First Year Related concepts
72	*Challenges of first year*
73	*Enjoyed first year*
74	Knowledge and skill development
75	*Benefit of fieldwork and practical experience*
76	*Benefit of theory and classwork*
77	*Theory practice link*
78	*Soft Skill development*
79	*Hard Skills development*
80	*Benefit of university learning*
81	*Holistic learning in the outdoors*
82	Personal and professional development through the course

83	Personal Cost of field time
84	Difficulty with professional field requirements
85	**Theme 4 - Family, Friends, General Social Perceptions and their impacts**
86	**Family, Friends and public perception**
87	Public perception - Devaluing as 'fun' not a real career or profession
88	Fun - they have it - what others think about it
89	Family and friends' thoughts on professional identity
90	Personal identity definition (friends)
91	Explaining Oed to friends
92	Friends not understanding of Oed
93	Friends' understanding of Oed
94	Friends not supportive
95	Professional identity definition (family)
96	Explaining Oed to family
97	Family experience
98	Family not supportive
99	Family supportive of course choice
100	**Theme 5 - Effects of Peer relationships and Role Modelling**
101	**Relationships**
102	Relationship building with peers
103	Relationships with staff
104	Role modelling

Appendix I

Bachelor of Sport Management (Outdoor Recreation) – ABSR Course Delivery Plan

Unit Code	Unit Title
Year 1 Semester 1	
AHS0249	Theory and Practice of Adventure Programming
AHS1012	Theories of Outdoor Education
AHS1100	Introduction to Sport and Recreation
AHS1200	Sport and Recreation Management
Year 1 Semester 2	
AHS0141	Bushwalking Leadership
AHS1013	Outdoor Safety Skills
AHS1107	Sport, Leisure and Society
AHS3500	Sport and Recreation Financial Management
Year 2 Semester 1	
AHS1015	Environmental Inquiry
AHS1207	Sport and Recreation Career Development 1
AHS2400	Human Resources in Sport and Recreation
plus Elective 1	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 2 Semester 2	
AHS1016	Leadership in the Outdoors
AHS3503	Legal Issues in Sport and Recreation
plus Elective 2	Outdoor Leadership Unit
plus Elective 3	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 3 Semester 1	
AHS1017	Contemporary Outdoor Recreation Issues and Trends
AHS1018	Expedition Leadership
AHS3505	Sport Recreation and Sustainability
plus Elective 4	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 3 Semester 2	
AHS1019	Outdoor and Environmental Philosophy
AHS2300	Event Management in Sport and Recreation
AHS3600	Sport and Recreation Career Development
plus Elective 5	Outdoor Leadership Unit

Appendix J

Bachelor of Education (Outdoor Education) – ABED Course Delivery Plan

Unit Code	Unit Title
Year 1, Semester 1	
AEB1101	Learning in a Changed World
AEB1200	Numeracy and Mathematics
Discipline Specialisation A1	
Discipline Specialisation B1- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 1, Semester 2	
AEB1210	Understanding Learning
AEB1250	Communication and Social Action
AEB1301	Inquiry for Mathematical Understanding
Discipline Specialisation B2- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 2, Semester 1	
AEB2110	Teachers Knowing Students
AEB2150	Reasoning for Problem Solving
Discipline Specialisation A2	
Discipline Specialisation B3- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 2, Semester 2	
AEB2210	Making the Conditions for Learning
AEB2302	Science, Environment and Sustainability
Discipline Specialisation A3	
Discipline Specialisation B4- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 3, Semester 1	
AEB3301	Inquiry Into Adolescent Teaching and Learning
Secondary PCK for Specialisation A	
Discipline Specialisation A4	
Discipline Specialisation B5- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 3, Semester 2	
AEB3302	Critical Practices for Teachers in Secondary Schools
Secondary PCK for Specialisation B	
Discipline Specialisation A5 or other elective	
Discipline Specialisation B6- Outdoor Leadership Unit	
Year 4, Semester 1	
AEB4110	Change and Social Justice
AEB2250	Healthy Activity, Community and Wellbeing
AEB2251	Imagination, Creativity and Design

AEB2301   Rethinking Australian Studies

Year 4, Semester 2
AEB4210   Practice in Partnership
AEB4250   Professional Orientation
AEB4211   Joining the Profession

Appendix K

Bachelor of Youth Work (Outdoor Recreation) - ABYW – Course Delivery Plan

Unit Code	Unit Title
Year 1, Semester 1	
AEB1800	Youth Work Practice
AEB1803	Youth Work Contexts
Outdoor Leadership Elective	
Outdoor Leadership Elective	
Year 1, Semester 2	
AEB1801	Youth Work Practice 2
AEB1802	Youth Work Programs
AEB2800	Working With Diverse Young People
Outdoor Leadership Elective	
Year 2, Semester 1	
AEB2801	Gangs and Groups: the Culture of Young People
AEB2802	Ethics and Youth Work Practice
AEB2805	Young People, Diversion and Restorative Practices
AEB3803	Professional Practice 1
Year 2, Semester 2	
AEB2803	Holistic Practice With Young People
AEB2806	Principles of Youth Participation
AEK1201	Indigenous Australian Knowing
Outdoor Leadership Elective	
Year 3, Semester 1	
AEB3801	Youth Policy and Civics
AEB3802	Professional Culture and Collaboration
AEB3804	Research and Young People
Outdoor Leadership Elective	
Year 3, Semester 2	
AEB3805	Youth Policy, Civics and Culture
AEB3807	Youth Research Project
AEB3808	Professional Practice 2
Outdoor Leadership Elective	

Appendix L

Bachelor of Applied Science (Physical Education) - HBPY – Course Delivery Plan

Unit Code	Unit Title
HPE1101	Structural Kinesiology
AHE1127	Aquatics
AHE1206	Sport Psychology
RBM1174	Human Physiology
Year 1, Semester 2	
AHE2013	Gymnastics and Dance
AHE2016	Biomechanics for Physical Education
AHE2104	Exercise Physiology
AHE2112	History of Sport
Year 2, Semester 1	
AHE3121	Athletics
AHE2127	Motor Learning
AHE2103	Growth Development and Ageing
Elective 1	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 2, Semester 2	
AHE2014	Physical Education Career Development
AHE3280	Team Sports
AHE2012	Adolescent Human Development
Elective 2	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 3, Semester 1	
AHE1203	Social Dimensions of Sport and Exercise
AHE2005	Nutrition and Diet for Exercise and Physical Education
Elective 3	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Elective 4	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Year 3, Semester 2	
AHE3200	Professional Ethics
AHE3219	Adapted Physical Education
Elective 5	Outdoor Leadership Unit
Elective 6	Outdoor Leadership Unit