

'Planting the seed': Family preferences, experiences and benefits associated with outdoor recreation in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

There is a dearth of published research informing an in-depth understanding of recreational experiences of families in the outdoors, particularly when cultural values may be and influence on activity and setting preferences. The present study aims at providing a better understanding of activity choices, experiences, benefits and constraints for family outdoor recreation in natural areas. The study focuses on Dunedin and Wellington families in order to present perspectives from two major urban settings in New Zealand, representing the South and the North Island. In addition, one rural area, Twizel, was included for comparison purposes. Interviews with 25 families from the three locations were conducted between late 2009 and early 2010. This study also involves an analysis of public initiatives that intend to encourage active engagement of families in public natural areas. To this end, seven in-depth, face-to-face interview sessions were conducted with a total of ten representatives from different levels of central and local government. Public documents relevant to the promotion of recreational opportunities were analysed for their family orientation. In addition, the study provides findings that illustrate Pākehā, Māori and Pacific Island perspectives as a result of interviewing families with diverse cultural backgrounds at the study sites.

This study identified a number of features impacting upon family participation in outdoor recreation in New Zealand. These are grouped under three major themes in this report, namely Family Life-Stages, Barriers or Constraints to Participation, and Cultural Influences. Recommendations for 'family-friendly' policy and planning development in outdoor recreation are presented.