# Finding Herself: Examining Identity Formation in Female Canadian Backpackers

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

This study addresses the shortage of research on the meaning of travel experiences for tourists as well as research on female travelers. I examine the activities of Canadian women who backpacked in Europe and to what extent, if any, these activities facilitated identity development. The sample group is comprised of 19 Canadian women ranging from 20-40 years of age. E-mail interviews were conducted with participants to gain information about their travel activities and the meanings of these activities. Identity growth was evaluated on the basis of participants' reports including the extent to which participants reported experimentation. I hypothesized that during travel women would partake in risky behaviours (defined as increased alcohol and drug use, participation in adventure sports and atypical sexual activities) and thereby explore their identities. Interviews revealed that while women did explore their identities during travel, it was not primarily through risky behaviours. Moreover, participants responded with difficulty to questions concerning their out-of-character behaviours. Participants reported that while their behaviours may have been atypical, they did not necessarily define their behaviours as out-of-character. Rather, participants framed these behaviours as extensions of typical activities. Identity development principally resulted from respondents having to navigate the trip for themselves, which conferred a sense of independence and personal strength.

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# Chapter 1 : Introduction

Tourism is arguably the world's largest industry. In 2003, international tourism expenditures were US$525,079 million (World Tourism Organization 2004a). In 2004 there were a total of 763.2 million international tourist arrivals (World Tourism Organization 2004b). Of these 763.2 million tourists, the majority (395.2 million or 51.8%) were leisure travelers (World Tourism Organization 2004c). Visiting friends and relatives, as well as health and religion-based travel accounted for 185 million tourists (24.2%) (World Tourism Organization 2004c). Business and professional travelers totaled 119.9 million tourists (15.7%) (World Tourism Organization 2004c). The remaining 63.2 million tourists' (8.3%) purpose of visit was unspecified (World Tourism Organization 2004c). Therefore, studying the meaning of travel to travelers themselves seems a worthwhile endeavor given the vast numbers of people affected by tourism.

In this study, I focus on one segment of the leisure tourism industry, female backpackers. I do not attempt to compare the experiences of women and men, but, as Fox (1992) recommends, I investigate the relationship between gender and leisure pursuits, i.e. how being a women can affect what, when and how leisure activities are pursued. In order to do so, I investigate the experiences and meanings of travel experiences as perceived by 19 Canadian women who backpacked in Europe. My interest in researching women's, rather than men's, experiences of travel is best articulated by Elsrud (1998, 310) who states: "My reason for interviewing only women about world traveling was not only that I was curious about travel experiences connected to womanhood, but because so

much of the earlier research on travel and tourism has been impregnated with a male bias." Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall (1994); Kinnaird and Hall (1996); Butler (1995); Swain (1995); Deem (1996); Ragheb (1996); Wearing and Wearing (1996); Desforges (2000); Enloe (2000); Pritchard and Morgan (2000); Urry (2002); Wall and Norris (2002); and Pritchard (2004) also cite the privileging of male experiences in tourism research through the generalizing of men's experiences to those of women, as well as philosophical assumptions which ignore differences between men's and women's interpretation of place. Wall and Norris (2002) explain that, until recently, few studies linked gender studies and tourism. Researchers considering gender in tourism primarily focused on impacts of tourism on the hosts' culture, society and natural environment (Gottlieb 1982; Pritchard and Morgan 2000), or women's employment in the tourism industry (Kinnaird and Hall 1994; Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Pritchard 2004), leaving a gap in the research on experiences of female travelers (Caballero and Hart 1996). Newlands (2004) and Slaughter (2004) argue that although women account for a significant proportion of global backpackers, rigorous studies of their experiences are lacking. By studying the experiences of backpacking women in Europe, I hope to address this current gap in the literature.

Similarly, growing evidence in tourism studies that the two sexes experience place, time and space in different ways has encouraged theorists to study leisure activities with greater gender sensitivity (Deem 1996; Elsrud 1998; Enloe 2000; Pritchard and Morgan 2000). As Deem (1996, 117) concludes, "Places, both familiar and unfamiliar, are indeed part of consumption but they are

not consumed in the same way regardless of gender. Nor are time and space ungendered." Following Deem (1996), Wearing and Wearing (1996, 237) suggest that feminized concepts of "experience" and "process" ought to be incorporated into the masculinist, and more traditional, concepts of "activity" and "visit" used in tourism discourse. Humberstone and Collins (1998) suggest that women, more often then men, are motivated by reflective and spiritual tourism experiences. Men, on the other hand, are motivated by competitive and exploitative experiences more often than women are.

I also hope to add information concerning the types of experiences that women seek out and to learn whether they contribute to identity development. Ragheb (1996), Deforges (2000), and Noy (2004) feel identity development is an under-represented topic in tourism studies, despite research by Braidotti (1994), Butler (1995), Wearing and Wearing (1996), Lee (1997), Elsrud (1998), Wearing (1998), Kayser Nielsen (1999), Enloe (2000), Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), Harrison (2003), Noy (2004), Pearce and Lee (2005). Identity, defined on pages 13, is developed throughout one's life via one's experiences. Leisure activities, and specifically traveling, allow individuals the opportunity to experiment with new life situations. In turn, these new life situations, whether they be pursuing a new activity or doing something independently, potentially allow individuals to better know their abilities and vulnerabilities thereby allowing travelers a better sense of identity. This study will examine this hypothesis by providing qualitative evidence from interviews with backpackers.

## *Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this study is to examine activities pursued by Canadian female backpackers in Europe. Participants' activities were analyzed to see if these activities contributed to the backpackers' process of identity development. I examine the responses of 19 women, ranging from 20-40 years of age, who have backpack-traveled in Europe. E-mail interviews were conducted with participants to gather information about their travel activities and the extent to which these activities helped them to develop their personal identities. These interviews revealed how traveling –encompassing a change in place, and often an abundance of time perceived as "free" or "personal" time, and opportunities to try new or risky activities – can be used as a catalyst for personal growth by female backpackers. This project also addresses the current lack of research on the meaning of travel experiences for tourists, as well as research on female travelers.

## *Definition of Terms*

Three key terms, backpacking, identity and identity development, will be used in this study.

The working definition of backpackers employed in this study will be that of Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995, 830-1), "[Backpackers are] travelers who exhibit a preference for budget accommodation; an emphasis on meeting other people (locals and travelers); an independently organized and flexible travel schedule; longer rather than brief holidays; and an emphasis on informal and participatory recreation activities". This is the same definition used by Newlands

(2004) in his study on backpackers in New Zealand. I do not consider wilderness or primitive recreation backpackers such as backcountry hikers in this study.

Identity refers to the ways in which an individual understands and defines her- or himself. One's identity allows an individual to interact with his or her surroundings. Identity is developed over the course of an individual's life by the various actions that she experiences (Budgeon 2003). Through these acts individuals are able to assimilate new qualities and characteristics that create their identity; this constitutes identity development.

## *Research Questions*

In order to address the meanings of backpacking in Europe for female backpackers, it was important to ascertain female backpackers' activities and how these backpackers subsequently felt about the meanings of their activities. Therefore, three research questions were developed:

1. What activities do women pursue while backpacking in Europe?
    1a. Do women experiment with, or increase their drug and alcohol use, participate in extreme sports, and/or have atypical sexual encounters?
2. Do these activities contribute to identity formation in women?
    2a. If identity formation took place, how was it manifested?
3. What specific aspects of traveling and of the destination allow for identity development?

"Risky" behaviours, i.e. participation in drug, alcohol, extreme sports and sexual encounters, were investigated to see if they aided the participants to better understand themselves. These behaviours were designated as risky because of the potential negative side effects that could result from the participation. This includes a bad "trip" when taking drugs, the loss of judgment leading to poor decision making as a result of intoxication, accidents that could result from defective equipment used in extreme sports, and the chance of sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy, or infection with sexually transmitted disease as a result of a sexual encounter. Additionally, there was also the risk of social disgrace at the hands of travel companions who may tell embarrassing or unfavourable stories to friends and family members at home. Risky behaviours were specifically targeted because they seem to be popular activities amongst backpackers (Elsrud 2001).

### *Thesis Outline*

This thesis is organized into five chapters. In Chapter Two, I review the relevant literature, examining the relationship between tourism and backpacking, the meaning of identity, the relationship between place and tourism, and the implications of liminality on the experience of travel. In Chapter Three, I present the methodology employed in the study, including a description of the participants, a definition of e-mail interviews, how the questionnaire was developed, and how the data were ultimately analyzed. In Chapter Four, I present the findings from the e-mail interviews. The results are organized around the four major themes that emerged from participants' responses, demographic information, independence and identity development, authenticity, and residual

effects from the trip. Chapter Five, discusses the implications of the results; how the results complement and question previous research on identity development and tourism. The thesis concludes with suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2 : Literature Review

In this chapter I examine the relationships between tourism, backpacking, and Europe. I begin with a brief history of backpacking, and then I examine different types of leisure travelers - institutional vs. non institutional tourists, backpackers, tourists and travelers. I also examine the importance of authenticity as it pertains to tourism. I also consider what identity is and how an identity is developed. Place is then considered as it relates to identity and identity development. I conclude the section with a discussion of the meaning of liminality, the significance of liminality in tourism, and how liminality influences a person's actions.

## *Traveling in Europe: From the Grand Tours to Today*

Cohen (2004), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), and Adler (1985) trace the beginning of backpacking to the grand tours in Europe of the 17$^{th}$ and 18$^{th}$ centuries. Grand tours started as trips for nobles and diplomats, most often men, from northern Europe. Grand tourists were usually on the road for two or three years making several stops visiting spas and historic sights in southern Europe (Graburn and Jafari 1991). Tutors, who acted as both chaperones and teachers, usually accompanied early grand tourists making the trip both a leisure activity and a learning opportunity. Over time, however, the number of grand tourists increased and the length of the journey and the travelers' incomes tended to decrease. Grand tourists often wrote about their experiences in travel guides, memoirs or travelogues (Graburn and Jafari 1991). Completing a grand tour

conferred upon men notions of sophistication, prestige and independence (Adler 1985; Locker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Richter 2005).

Grand tours established the pattern for modern European backpackers, who tend to take lengthy trips dotted by stops throughout Europe. Subsequently grand tours by young, less wealthy travelers encouraged the development of inexpensive accommodations throughout Europe. The establishments of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in the mid-1800s were the first brand-name hostels in Europe. They offered inexpensive accommodations as well as social activities that encouraged the proliferation of budget travelers throughout the continent. This trend set the precedent for the establishment of other hostels and hostel chains that cater to the budget travelers' desire for affordable accommodations (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995).

Today, Europe remains a popular tourist destination for travelers of all types. In 2002, Europe received nearly 400 million tourist arrivals, and 57% of all international tourist arrivals, making it the world's most popular continent for tourists (World Tourism Organization 2003, 11). The majority of international visitors in Europe are Europeans themselves, comprising 88.1% of all tourist arrivals (World Tourism Organization 2003, 49). Of the remaining tourists, the largest group, 5.8%, originated from the Americas, many of whom are destined for Western Europe (World Tourism Organization 2003, 43). Leisure travel remains the primary purpose for people vacationing in Europe (53.8%) (World Tourism Organization 2003, 47-8). "Visiting friends and relatives, health, religion

and other", as well as business and professional travel make up 24.1 per cent and 22 per cent respectively, of arrivals (World Tourism Organization 2003, 47-8).

## *Tourism and Backpacking*

For the purposes of this study, tourism and traveling are understood as being voluntary experiences undertaken as part of an individual's leisure time; a time when an individual willingly seeks reprieve from her daily routine (Graburn 1983; Deem 1996; Wearing and Wearing 1996; Urry 2002). Choice is an important element of this definition as there are people on the move, such as refugees, for whom travel is not willingly elected (Ahmed 2000). Moreover, as Braidotti (1994, 10) explains, even for those who willingly elect to travel, individual travelers are responsible for how they will negotiate their travels.

Business travelers are omitted from this study. Business travel is a significant proportion of the tourism industry but business trips primarily are about one's work and socializing with colleagues, although business travelers can combine meetings and conventions with tourist activities (Smith 1977, 2; 2001, 65-6). This study focuses on leisure travelers who ought to be considered a privileged group with access to discretionary income and time (Ahmed 2000; Gibson 2003).

## Different Types of Leisure Travelers

Until recently, tourism research tended to distinguish between tourists and travelers, starting with Boorstin (1964). He stated that tourists were passive vacation takers, waiting for pleasure to find them, and travelers were active,

seeking out adventure. Almost a decade later, Cohen (1972) suggested a spectrum of vacation-takers (Figure 1). Cohen's (1972) spectrum involved two groups (institutionalized and non institutionalized tourists), each with two additional subgroups (group mass tourist and individual mass tourist, and explorer and drifter, respectively).

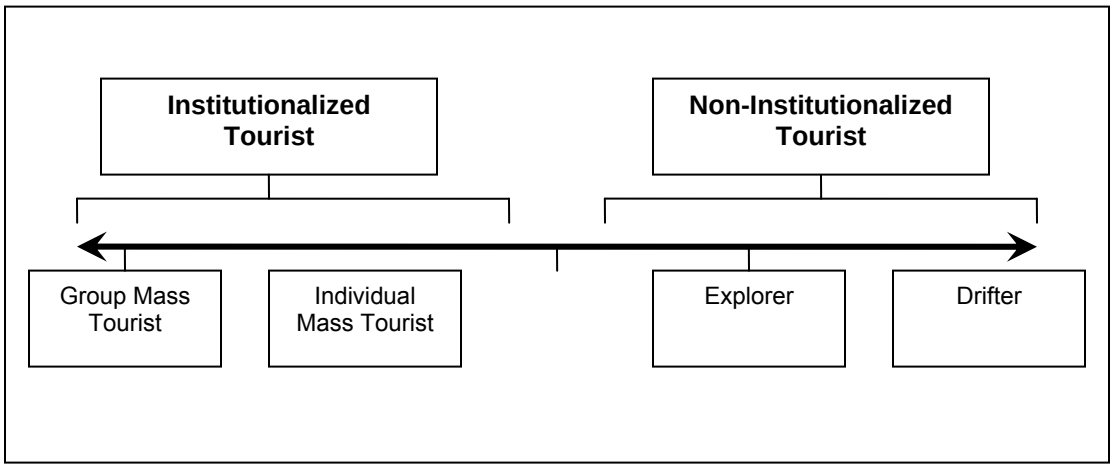



Figure 1: Cohen's (1972) Tourist Typologies

Institutionalized tourists enjoy having most trip aspects planned prior to leaving their home. Cohen (1972) differentiated this group into two parts, group and individual mass tourists. Group mass tourists generally travel as part of an organized tour or to an all-inclusive resort thereby having most of the trip details arranged prior to leaving home. Likewise, individual mass tourists preplan their itinerary, likely through a travel agent at home, but are slightly more flexible than group mass tourists as they are unlikely to join a group or package tour. Despite their greater flexibility than group mass tourists, individual mass tourists typically stay close to popular sites and tourist centres. Conversely, non-institutionalized tourists, according to Cohen (1972), enjoy greater independence and attempt to plan their trips independently and shun organized tours and all-inclusive resorts.

The first type of non-institutionalized tourists specified by Cohen (1972) is explorers. Explorers enjoy planning their trip independently, getting away from mainstream tourist destinations, and interacting with local residents; while embracing comfortable accommodations, reliable transportation and maintaining some of their home routines. Cohen's (1972) second type is drifters, who are the most independent of all travelers. They attempt to integrate themselves with the hosts on a deeper level than do explorers, by rejecting mainstream tourist attractions and, when possible, staying with local residents. Drifters also dismiss itineraries and timetables and will often secure employment in host destinations in order to extend their journey and to act more like a local resident, thereby blending the distinction between work and holiday (Cohen 1972).

Tourists are usually thought to be institutionalized vacationers, while travelers may view themselves as non-institutionalized. In theory, backpackers are part of non-institutionalized tourism as discussed by Riley (1988) and Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), who demonstrate backpackers' preference for flexible itineraries and interacting with local residents who do not work for the tourism industry. Because of these preferences, backpackers are considered a type of modern drifter tourist (Cohen 2004). Drifters can carry very negative connotations of participating in boorish sexual activities, rampant drug use and a general disregard for the cultural norms of their hosts (Cohen 2004). Unfortunately this association has led to the negative stereotyping of backpackers as being "unkempt, immoral, drug-taking individual[s]" (Scheyvens

2002, 145), and has resulted in the shunning of backpackers as viable segments of the tourist industry in some parts of the world.

Kontogeorgopoulos (2003, 181) for example, describes how some female backpackers and adventure tourists in Thailand demonstrate insensitivity to conservative local views regarding nudity and sexuality when they sunbathe topless. This conduct draws resentment from the local Thais and reinforces stereotypes of promiscuous Western women (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003, 181). Conversely, Cohen (2004) points out that while some backpackers use illegal substances, drink alcohol frequently, and flaunt their liberal views of sexuality this is not true of all backpackers. Cohen (2004) specifically notes working- and middle-class backpackers as exceptions.

Today, Boorstin's (1964) and Cohen's (1972) distinctions remain helpful when speaking of large groups of tourists, but more recent research suggests that these original classifications are too simplistic for the many different types of travel occurring today (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; 2004; Taylor and Chesworth 2005). Prebensen, Larsen, and Abelsen (2002), Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002), Huxley (2003), Mohsin and Ryan (2003), Cohen (2004), Noy (2004), Shaw and Williams (2004, 154-9) and Welk (2004) argue that backpackers and other vacation-takers traditionally thought of as non-institutionalized travelers, and those traditionally thought of as institutionalized tourists share many similarities. Indeed, Mehmetoglu (2004, 87) goes as far as to say that all travelers and tourists are institutionalized, and that "the "traveler" in the original sense no longer exists, and that only tourists remain."

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) explain that backpacking differs from other styles of tourism in its *forms* rather than its *types*. Forms are the, "visible institutional arrangements and practices by which tourists organize their journey: length of trip, flexibility of itinerary, visited destinations and attractions, means of transportation and accommodation, contact with locals [inhabitants], and so forth" (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002, 521). Types, on the other hand, are the "less tangible psychological attributes, such as tourists' attitudes towards fundamental values of their own society, their motivations for travel, and the meanings they assign to their experiences." (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002, 521). Similarly, Mehmetoglu (2004) concludes that all tourists can be classified according to the amount of organization prior to departure and throughout their trip.

Interestingly, while Howard (2005) found that most of his participants fit this description of a backpacker (preferring long rather than short holidays, socializing with other backpackers and frequently using word-of-mouth recommendations) he also found that many participants did not interact with local residents beyond the commercial sector nor did they report "partying". The lack of interaction with local residents beyond commercial activities is somewhat surprising given that backpackers seem to want authentic experiences, facilitated by personal interaction with locals. Howard (2005) did his research in Khaosan Road in Thailand, renowned as a hub for backpackers, and including many bars. At first glance these findings contradict the typical backpacker image as the partier, the one which closely links them to the "drifter". However, I believe Howard's (2005) results are slightly misleading. Howard's (2005) questionnaire

did not include opened-ended questions and only allowed participants to choose one of a set list of responses. Indeed, to streamline calculations, Howard (2005) dismissed any responses with two or more answers. Moreover, although a participant may not list partying as their number one reason for visiting a destination, going to bars and/or nightclubs can still be a major part of their vacation. For example, when asked in an open-ended question what were their complaints about Khaosan Road, a few participants mentioned the “early” bar closing time of 1am. For some backpackers, then, going to clubs was important. Therefore, although Howard’s (2005) findings help to confirm Cohen’s (2004) findings that not all backpackers are interested in partying, to say that backpackers did not party is misleading.

This ambiguity regarding how much, if any, partying backpackers do, echoes recent calls for more detailed studies of this traveling group to better understand its nuances (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; Cohen 2004). Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) and Mohsin and Ryan (2003) help to update the definition of backpackers. Their works demonstrate that today, the term backpacker applies to a wide range of traveling styles. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) studied 106 backpackers in New Zealand and suggested a spectrum of backpackers, with “traditional, long-term, budget travelers” at one end, and “mainstream backpackers” at the other. Likewise, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) studied backpackers in the Northern Territory of Australia. Although they did not identify the same spectrum of types of backpackers, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) did identify some similar backpacker traits to Ateljevic and Doorne (2000). The following

table identifies the major characteristics of traditional, long-term budget travelers to New Zealand as identified by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), and to ease comparison, Mohsin and Ryan's (2003) findings have been listed along side.

**Table 1: Comparison of Findings by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) and Mohsin and Ryan (2003)**

| | **Long-term Budget Travelers (Ateljevic and Doorne (2000)** | **General Traits of Backpackers (Mohsin and Ryan 2003)** |
|---|---|---|
| **Travel Experience** | Possessing substantial travel experience | *Not mentioned* |
| **Budget** | Maintaining a strict budget, facilitating a longer trip than the mainstream backpackers, typically part of a long (about a year) multi-country trip. | Maintaining a strict budget helped extend the backpacker's trip |
| **Influence of Paid Employment** | Many combined work and travel helping to extend the duration of their trip. | Those who had quit their jobs to travel were more likely to seek part-time employment within the tourism sector while abroad |
| **Destinations** | Attempting to get away from popular tourist destinations | While in the Northern Territory, the backpackers and tourists visited many similar sites |
| **Interaction with Local Residents** | Unhappiness with a fast-paced Western way of life: Typically, mass commercialization is rejected in favour of locally owned and operated companies, which also facilitate backpacker's desire to interact with local residents. | Backpackers, like many other travelers in Australia, did not express great interest in the Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people were seen as more of the backdrop to other adventures available. |
| **Trip Motivations, Differences Between Men and Women** | Seeing travel as a form of personal growth and escape, seeking new experiences to help gain a fresh perspective. This was especially true for some single female travelers experiencing a life-crisis. For these women travel was an opportunity for transformation, a reprieve from at-home stresses, and changes to their lifestyle upon return. | Some, but not all, backpackers were traveling as part of a Rite of Passage trip between life stages (especially those who had quit their job to travel).<br>Female, more so then male, backpackers preferred areas that were deemed "safe". This may result in men being more willing to venture off the beaten track than women are. |
| **Desire to Travel As Soon As Possible** | Fear that New Zealand would become "touristy". | *Not mentioned* |
| **Animosity Between Backpackers and others** | Actively distanced themselves from the mainstream backpackers by defining themselves as real and non-commercialized travelers. | *Not mentioned* |
| | **Mainstream Backpackers (Ateljevic and Doorne (2000)** | **General Traits of Backpackers (Mohsin and Ryan 2003)** |
| **Age of Mainstream Backpackers** | Typically younger than the long-haul backpackers. | Not all backpackers were young; many were older and simply wishing to use inexpensive accommodations and transportation systems. |
| **Experience Sought** | Unlike long-haul backpackers, they | *Not mentioned* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | seek international experience rather than have it | |
| **Length of Trip** | Trips generally lasted less than three months | *Not mentioned* |
| **Travel Route** | Traveled either as part of an organized group or stuck to the well established backpacking routes. | *Not mentioned* |
| **Separation of Home and Traveling** | Travel was a period of activities, away from daily responsibilities. | *Not mentioned* |
| **Motivation** | Strongly motivated by the desire to pursue adventure sports. | *Not mentioned* |
| **Budget and Authenticity** | Because their trips were shorter, mainstream backpackers typically had larger budgets then the long-haul backpackers, allowing mainstream backpackers to seek out the most exclusive adventure sports in Queensland. Consequently, these activities were considered the most authentic and were more expensive than in other locations, which were actively shunned by the mainstream backpackers. | *Not mentioned* |
| **Labeling Themselves** | The mainstream backpackers did not compare themselves to the long-haul backpackers, however they were clear that they were not “tourists”. | *Not mentioned* |
| **Word of Mouth** | *Not mentioned* | Word of mouth and the Internet were invaluable sources of information for backpackers when designing their trip |

Although Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2000) results are more in depth than Mohsin and Ryan’s (2003), comparing their results proves helpful as it highlights the commonalities between these two studies. Just as Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) found, these studies confirm that backpackers enjoy group activities and pursue participatory activities, and that backpackers enjoy long, usually in excess of one month, trips. Additionally, they show that for some, particularly women, who have undergone a difficult transition at home, the opportunity to travel for an extended period of time is welcomed. Although, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) findings seem to contradict the reported desire to interact with local residents found by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), Mohsin and Ryan (2003) asked about actual instances of interacting with local residents whereas Ateljevic and Doorne (2000)

asked about the desire to interact. Howard (2005) also notes that while backpackers report wanting to interact with local residents, they tend not to do so beyond the service sector.

Additionally, although Mohsin and Ryan (2003) did not make the same distinction between long-term and mainstream backpackers, their findings support Ateljevic and Doorne's (2000) classification. Of Mohsin and Ryan's (2003) participants, those who sought to travel for a longer period of time had to adhere to a tighter budget, and therefore made use of backpacker enclaves for inexpensive accommodations and transportation; these can be considered a type of mainstream backpacker. The participants in Mohsin and Ryan's (2003) study who had quit their jobs and were traveling as a period of self-discovery can be considered long-haul backpackers. Both these studies therefore confirm the results of Mehmetoglu (2004) and Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) who argue it is the more the degree of arrangement prior to departure rather than less tangible characteristics like overall trip motivations or desires which distinguishes most backpackers today.

Avoiding the "tourist" label was also something that Prebensen, Larsen and Ablesen (2003) found to be important to the German travelers they studied. Prebensen, Larsen and Ablesen (2003) studied self-perception of nearly 500 German tourists traveling to Norway, the vast majority of whom, 89.5%, labeled themselves as "nontypical German tourists". However, when probed about the characteristics of a typical tourist the two groups' reported similar descriptions of modes of travel, motives and typical activities. Moreover, when asked to describe

their activities and motives for traveling, the two group's descriptions did not significantly differ from each other. These results lead Prebensen, Larsen and Ablesen (2002) to conclude that although people tend to view themselves as distinct individuals, most tend to follow similar patterns to one and another.

Cohen (2004) describes the travel patterns of backpackers suggesting that different types of hostels attract certain groups of backpackers. Backpackers just beginning their travels will be drawn to hostels in urban enclaves in order to orientate themselves and plan the rest of their trip. Conversely, backpackers who have been on the road a while will gravitate to rural hostels offering greater social interaction amongst backpackers and with local residents. And despite the backpacker's desire for assimilation into the local culture, Cohen (2004) found that nationality influenced the amount of interaction between some backpackers. Some backpackers would seek out other travelers who shared cultural traits and/or a common language. This lead Cohen (2004) to conclude that backpacking and mass tourism were quite similar, "There … exists a parallelism between backpacker and mass tourism, the [backpacker] enclaves fulfilling a function parallel to that of vacationing resorts, in which most mass tourists tend to spend their holidays. Only a minority of backpackers travels off the beaten backpacker tracks, or spend much of their time staying with local people" (Cohen 2004, 392).

Additional evidence that the backpacker segment is more diverse is the increasing number of companies catering to the desires of backpackers, despite backpackers' apparent preference for non-organized tours (Shaw and Williams

2004). Backpacker guidebooks and the popular media publicize certain lodging establishments and sites creating popular routes (Huxley 2003; Sorensen 2003; Shaw and Williams 2004, 156). Several of Huxley's (2003) participants mentioned that they kept meeting the same backpackers as they were all following a similar route. One of them specifically noted the common routes backpackers follow because of the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks. Therefore, while backpackers are seldom part of a fully organized tour and despite their desire for novelty, they seem to be increasingly structuring their journeys by following popular routes. In Europe, organized groups and specialized services offered from groups of countries cater to the backpacker's desire for flexibility.

Busabout (www.busabout.com), for instance, is a tour operator allowing bus pass holders to travel between selected European countries. This plan allows pass holders considerable flexibility to "hop on hop off" the bus in various cities, but travelers must follow the bus routes established by Busabout. Busabout also promotes certain low-budget accommodations throughout Europe. They cater to those wishing for "independent, flexible travel" and "for those with a yearning to explore and a sense of fun and adventure."

Eurail (www.eurail.com) is another similar service offered collectively by many European railway companies. People wishing to travel by Eurail buy their passes in their home countries and once in Europe can travel between selected destinations at a reduced fare. This eases travel as only one pass is needed as one moves between most countries in Europe.

Another example of a service that facilitated tourism in Europe by groups of countries is the Euro. The widespread usage of the Euro in many parts of Europe has eased travelers' movements throughout Europe; one currency has allowed travelers to move throughout most of Europe without exchanging money, thereby saving travelers money on exchange rates and commissions (Rátz and Puczkó 1999). These types of services, especially the Eurail pass and Busabout tours, are invaluable for backpackers who want flexibility and who rebuff itineraries. However, these services also channel travelers through pre-designed routes. European countries without the Euro or who do not participant in the Eurail may be avoided because of the extra cost and perceived difficulty of exchanging money. And in the case of rail and bus routes, which cannot deviate from their path, travelers will always be picked up and dropped off at specific stations. Therefore, these services and others like them question the true uniqueness of the holiday experience.

One's choice of transportation also seems to be a marker of whether one is a tourist or traveler. In their study of backpackers in New Zealand, Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) explain the implications of modes of transit. Some of Ateljevic and Doorne's (2000) long-haul backpackers felt that public mass transit, such as trains and buses, had become too "big" (i.e. commercial) and preferred small transit systems. The big transportation systems lacked flexibility; therefore, some of the long-haul backpackers would rent or buy bicycles, purchase a private car for travel purposes, or hitchhike in order to get around New Zealand. Unfortunately, Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) do not indicate whether or not the

public transit routes have reduced their range or if backpackers now seek more remote destinations.

Gmelch (2004) also found that flexibility in transportation schedules was important. In his study of backpackers in Europe, Gmelch (2004) noticed how backpackers would change their itinerary based on train schedules. If, for instance, they planned on going to Nice but arrived at the train station to find that the train for Monaco was leaving sooner, Gmelch (2004) found many would simply take the train to Monaco and go to Nice another time.

Unfortunately, despite the ambiguity in defining a “traveler” and a “mass tourist”, people who define themselves as travelers often express animosity to those whom they label as tourists (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; Prebensen, Larsen, and Abelsen 2002; Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002; Noy 2004; Welk 2004; Howard 2005). The contempt arises out of the desire by travelers to have exclusive access to authentic tourist destinations (Noy 2004), and the perception that tourists are introducing the ‘West’ to local inhabitants and thereby ruining the destination’s authenticity (Kontogeorgopoulous 2003). As Welk (2004) argues, it is perhaps the rejection of anything “touristy” that unites backpacking travelers more than any other characteristic.

In this section, I have outlined the perceived differences between backpackers and mass tourism, and have explained that these differences are often more imagined than practiced. However, other characteristics unite backpackers, even if they are not exclusive to the backpacker community, and

therefore, for the purposes of this study, the following characteristics are meant to be implied by the term backpacker:

- Someone who plans her itinerary,
- Someone who desires interaction with local people,
- Someone who focuses on budget accommodations and transportation styles,
- Someone who prefers long rather than short vacations,
- Someone who enjoys participatory activities.

## Authenticity

Authenticity is a highly contested and often ambiguous term prompting some tourism researchers, such as Reisinger and Steiner (2006a; 2006b) to argue that the term authenticity should be altogether abandoned from tourism research discussions. In their rebuttal, Belhassen and Caton (2006) argue that its ambiguity is an insufficient reason to abandon studying authenticity because it remains an important motivator of tourists and travelers. Below I introduce some of the main concepts concerning authenticity, including its status as a hotly contested topic in tourism research, and demonstrate the connection between backpackers and authenticity.

Authenticity refers to the genuineness, or "trueness", of an object, act or event (Wang 2000). As Huxley (2003, 43) states, "Authenticity is defined as routine aspects of mundane quotidian existence, reproduced on an everyday basis, and located outside of the tourist centers and infrastructure." Authenticity is typically based on whether local residents have made souvenirs or performed

shows, and the extent to which the artisans have conformed to tradition when doing so (Wang 2000). For cognitive objectivists, objects or activities in museums or antiquities sales are authentic only if they are from the time period in question and if they can be proven to be by means of scientific tests such as carbon dating or confirmation through third-party sources. However, this objective approach leaves much to be desired in judging the authenticity of traditional dances or rituals that cannot be authenticated by means of a test or historical documentation. Moreover, the cognitive objective approach ignores the postmodern claim that authenticity is not within an object to be determined, but is a quality decided upon by the viewer or participant (Eco 1986).

The following example may help illustrate how tourists, travelers and local residents all negotiate authenticity. A group of tourists and travelers buy tickets to see a performance of a traditional dance put on by local residents. The people performing the dance are paid for their services and have shortened the performance to accommodate the scheduling demands of tourists. Performing the dance has helped preserve at least portions of a tradition within the community which otherwise would have been lost to modernization, and has helped educate visitors about some of the historical traditions of their destination (for examples see: Cohen 1988; Xie 2003

However, for travelers the main characteristic of an authentic experience or artifact is its exclusivity, and the drive to seek out the authentic is extremely powerful. Kontogeorgopoulos (2003) specifically notes that most backpackers identify areas as inauthentic by the amount of Western influence and the number

of foreign tourists found there. And conversely, those areas with the fewest tourists and the least amount of Western influence are often the most appealing for their perceived authenticity (Kontogeorgopoulous 2003).

The search for authenticity is seen in travelers' activities as well as their souvenir purchases. In one example the purchasing habits of travelers in Yunnan Province in China (Doorne, Ateljevic and Bai 2003), travelers sought out embroidered souvenirs they perceived as authentic. These products were typically produced by the Miao people and were considered more authentic than other products because the of Miao people's elusiveness and because of the superb quality of the embroidered objects (Doorne, Ateljevic and Bai 2003, 8). Conversely, products produced by the Han people were made using more modern techniques and fibers, and were more readily available throughout the country. Therefore, the Han products were considered more generically "Chinese" and lost some of their exclusivity, rendering the Miao artifacts the more sought after and "authentic" souvenir.

Searching for authenticity in terms of experiences and of souvenirs can also affect travelers' choice of destination. Pearce (1988), Riley (1998), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), Scheyvens (2002), Huxley (2003), Newlands (2004), Noy (2004) and Welk (2004) all observed backpackers' preference for off-the-beaten-track destinations in hopes to see and interact with local residents living "authentically", which was not considered possible in popular tourist enclaves.

To describe the popular and remote tourist destinations, MacCannell (1976; 1989; 1999), further developing Goffman's (1959) theories on authenticity, developed the concepts of "front" and "back" tourism regions. Front regions are the areas where tourists interact with service personnel and/or local residents, such as in theatres or hotel grounds (MacCannell 1999, 92). Bruner (1994) and Edensor (2001) point out that in these front regions, the tourist image is usually tightly controlled and tourists typically see only what the tourism industry deems fitting with that place's image. In contrast, back regions are places where service personnel and/or local residents retreat after their "performances" to rest and prepare for their next show, such as their homes or out-of-the-way bars (MacCannell 1999, 92). He suggests that front regions are considered less authentic than the back regions because the activities in the front region are performed for tourists whereas in back regions, however, they are intended for local residents.

Most places cannot be designated as exclusively front or back regions and it is therefore preferable to think of MacCannell's (1999) distinctions as a spectrum, with locations tending to be more of one type of region than the other, but holding properties of both. For example, when I was in Cinque Terra, a collection of five small fishing villages in northern Italy, I hiked a trail connecting the five towns. On the first leg of the hike, I passed by a couple's home, where an elderly gentleman was selling lemons, assumingly just picked from his small orchard. Here, this man's private property was both a front and back region. He and his wife owned the land and house, and lived there whether tourists were to

pass by or not. However, in peak tourist seasons, the man was able to make some extra money by offering weary travelers a treat, and in doing so made himself, the orchard and his home a front region for tourists to gaze upon and consume as part of their adventure.

Backpackers seem particularly motivated by the desire to see back regions (the authentic), and to get away from front regions (the inauthentic). The desire to find original people and artifacts of a culture can be called constructionist authenticity, where tourists and travelers decide whether or not a given experience is authentic (Wang 2000). This is a subjective decision where tourists decide something is authentic based on their feelings and expectations. Also, Wang (2000) describes another approach to authenticity called semiotic: tourists and travelers look for signs in order to accept something as authentic. These signs can literally be sign posts authenticating a site or artifact, or signs can be other tourists appreciating a site or artifact. Either of these interpretations of authenticity suggests that authenticity is not objective but negotiable.

Muzaini's (2006) study in Southeast Asia and Huxley's (2003) study of Western backpackers are good examples of semiotic and constructionist authenticities that are often employed by backpackers. Both Huxley (2003) and Muzaini (2006) found that backpackers avoid front regions in pursuit of authentic, back region experiences. By getting away from popular tourist areas, participants in both studies felt they would be able to see and interact with the "real" local people. Muzaini (2006) found that in the back regions backpackers attempted to make purchases from local retailers as opposed to international chains, and stay

in inexpensive and locally-owned accommodations. He called this a spatial tactic since it influenced backpacker movements.

Huxley (2003) and Muzaini (2006) also reported that backpackers used behaviour and bodily tactics to increase their interactions with local residents in whatever way they thought was most authentic. These tactics included how and with whom backpackers interacted, such as attempting to communicate with the local people in their native language (although the backpacker's knowledge of the local language was usually limited); associating with veteran travelers who have some familiarity with the destination; or trying to blend in with local residents, such as by wearing "local" attire. Backpackers employ these methods to look more like local residents in hopes of being accepted by local residents as "one of their own", thereby having a more genuine traveling experience. Although Muzaini (2006) never uses the term "authentic" to describe the actions of the backpackers, the attempt to look like local residents is part of an attempt to get away from mainstream tourism and experience the more authentic life of the hosts.

Muzaini (2006) explains that although many backpackers try to look like local residents, their attempts are often futile, and sometimes offensive, and can draw resentment and ridicule from the local residents resulting in their segregation from the local culture. This happens when backpackers dress in traditional clothes that local residents have abandoned, or when backpackers haggle excessively with vendors to get "local" pricing. Huxley (2003) also discusses bargaining, noting that although many backpackers bargain to get

lower prices, their savings would often be marginal. Kontogeorgopoulous (2003, 184) explains that for many backpackers, one's spending habits serve as a benchmark as to how authentic a traveler one is, "Backpackers, especially, 'rough it' not only for budgetary reasons, but also out of a deep-seated mental association between material comfort and *in*authenticity." In this way, bargaining is less about saving money and more about doing what backpackers think local people do.

Muzaini (2006) also describes some results of his personal experiences of really looking like local residents throughout Southeast Asia because of his Singaporean heritage. Because of his physical appearance, Muzaini was able to weave between the worlds of traveler and local resident with greater ease than most of his non-Asian counterparts. In one instance in a restaurant, however, looking like a local was disadvantageous and resulted in poor service. Being perceived as a local resident, the assumption was that Muzaini did not have as much money as tourists and was therefore not treated kindly by the restaurant operators. However, Muzaini also found that in some instances, street vendors would give him discounts apparently because they believed him to be a local resident. Therefore, rather than anticipating rude service, most backpackers' expectations of authenticity were probably more closely connected to getting cheaper (i.e. "local") pricing.

The preceding discussion of authenticity has focused on what Cohen (2004) and Reisinger and Steiner (2006a; 2006b) term object authenticity. Object authenticity refers to the realness or genuineness of artifacts or events. For those

who believe authenticity is important, they will seek it out through their choices of accommodation, food, activities, destinations, and with whom they interact. Wang (1999) and Reisinger and Steiner (2006b, 299) develop another type of authenticity, existential authenticity that refers to a human attribute of being one's true self or being true to one's essential nature. Reisinger and Steiner's (2006b, 299) work is based upon the philosophy of existentialist Martin Heidegger. As the current study deals with how participants choose to negotiate their identity in foreign places, Wang's (1999) and Reisinger and Steiner's (2006a; 2006b) theories have significant implications.

Existential authenticity for Reisinger and Steiner (2006b, 300) is "[b]eing in touch with one's inner self, knowing one's self, having a sense of one's own identity and then living in accord with one's sense of one's self." Like Maslow's (1943) definition of self-actualization, Reisinger and Steiner (2006b) argue that it is essential that individuals are able to freely express themselves in order for them to truly be themselves; to reach self-actualization or to be fully authentic.

Reisinger and Steiner (2006b) suggest there are three important aspects when discussing existential authenticity: mindness, resoluteness, and situation. Reisinger and Steiner introduce the term mindness as the tourist's ability to interpret each situation independent of other people's understandings (Reisinger and Steiner 2006b, 306). I take this to be a synonym for being independent thinking and mindful (Reisinger and Steiner 2006b). For example, a tourist possessing mindness appreciates a guide's knowledge in so far as it informs her of the history of an exhibition, but she also recognizes her own interpretation and

act of being in front of the object as integral to interpreting the object. Resoluteness is the courage and tenacity an individual needs in order to have mindness. Because every individual comes to a situation with a unique history, the interpretation of anything will be different. For tourists to be resolute in their interpretation of a site requires them to be critical of the mainstream approach, and be willing to differ from it. This act of separating one's self from the mainstream approach requires the tourist to be courageous and tenacious since his or her views may not be shared, and may be shunned, by the mainstream (Reisinger and Steiner 2006b, 307).

Situation for Reisinger and Steiner (2006b, 307) refers to the "rare experiences in which people find themselves in their unique place in the world, in a unique situation in relation to the connectedness around them." They posit that tourism is the ideal opportunity for individuals to be authentic because tourism can present them with many different situations than their everyday life does.

The single most important characteristic of the tourist seeking existential authenticity is the desire to try many things (Reisinger and Steiner 2006b). Reisinger and Steinger (2006b, 312) provide some examples of simple experiential tourism such as seeking a sense of togetherness and belonging through family tourism; experiencing sights, events, natural, emotional bonds and real intimacy with others through recreational tourism; and experiencing *communitas* (such as through pilgrimage tourism). They also provide some examples of more personally challenging experiential tourism such as avoiding mainstream tourist spots and forging one's own route and pursing adventure

tourism, which are more typical of backpacking activities. These situations provide opportunities where tourists can have existentially authentic experiences. Elsrud's (1998; 2001; 2004), Huxley's (2003), Harrison's (2004), and Noy's (2004) studies are all examples of travelers attempting to learn about themselves through traveling. These studies exemplify existential authenticity in practice. Although most of these authors are skeptical of their participants' true ability to have authentic experiences, these authors agree that, to the backpackers, the experiences that they deem as authentic have significant personal meaning.

### *Identity*

In this section, I define identity and identity development by appealing to influential psychological theories of self-actualization and flow; and I examine how other scholars have applied them to tourism studies. I also discuss related characteristics of travel such as motivation and choice of destination. I conclude by discussing how traveling helps people to develop their identities.

Identity is a very complicated notion, and has been the subject of much research since the time of Aristotle. People express their identities in many different forms, such as in their clothing, their musical preferences, favorite school subjects, and in the political parties they support (Elsrud 2001). Identities are, in the most simplistic and complex way, a person's self - who one is and how one chooses to express one's self. Knowledge of the self is developed through social processes, whereby one learns about behaviours that one would like to mimic or reject,

> The self has a character which is different from that of the physiological organism proper. The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his [sic.] relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. (Mead 1967, 135).

Therefore, access to a wide variety of opportunities is of utmost importance if an individual is able to develop his or her character fully.

Braidotti (1994) and Budgeon (2003) more recently explored the relationship of the self as a mediator between an individual and his or her surroundings. “Identity is about the relationship between the individual and society, agency and structure, the link between the self and the social, the self and other.” (Budgeon 2003, 7). Identity allows individuals to interpret their surroundings and to express themselves. Budgeon (2003, 9) argues that in late modernity the social condition is shaped by both tradition and individualization, therefore, identity is constructed in tension with freedom and external sources of authority that operate to limit or shape one’s autonomy. Elsrud (2005) adds:

> It is important in relation to these notions to stress their situatedness as it is to a large extent the result of a European or “Western” theoretical perspective. Millions of people around the world, facing starvation, male dominance, and other rigid power structures would contest such a description [that identity can be constructed], finding it ridiculous. Also, within Europe and in countries described as “Western” the options available for progress and identity creation are unequally distributed. Thus, to many it is a system of beliefs, a discourse of makeability, and not a reality. (Elsrud 2005, 128)

Elsrud (2005, 128) also acknowledges that whether or not Western travelers and backpackers are aware of this privilege, they usually travel empowered with the belief that they are able and have the right to construct their identities.

Participating in leisure activities, as opposed to paid employment, is becoming increasingly important as a time and space for identity formation (Krippendorf 1987; Kayser Nielsen 1999). Green and Jones (2005) study serious sports leisure tourists, people who travel in order to participate in a sporting activity (such as going rock climbing or hiking) in a non-professional manner but with a nonetheless serious attitude. They suggest that if work fails to satisfy an individual's desire for personal development, a person may seek a sports-related leisure activity to do so (Green and Jones 2005). Krippendorf (1987) and Kayser Nielsen (1999) make stronger claims, suggesting that while paid employment remains important, self-development is more readily accessible via leisure pursuits. Work, they argue, in modern society is more restrictive than leisure pursuits.

If leisure can be taken as a valid means for individuals to ascertain their identities, then tourism, as a form of leisure, has potential as an identity-building pursuit. Graburn (1983) argues that modern tourism takes two forms, regularly scheduled trips and rites-of-passage. Regularly scheduled trips, such as summer vacations, mark the progression of cyclical life (Graburn 1983, 12). Contrarily, rite-of-passage tourism marks the passage of personal life from one status to another (Turner 1974; Wagner 1977; Graburn 1983; Selänniemi 2003; Cohen 2004; Birkeland 2005, 69-77). Rite-of-passage trips can include trips celebrating

milestones in one's life, such as a birthday, and they can also be cathartic experiences following a difficult life situation, such as a divorce (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; Howard 2005) (*NB*: the experiences of Katie and Queenie in this study). Unlike other rites-of-passage rituals, tourism is usually self-selected, rather than prescribed by society, and is therefore likely to be more personally meaningful to the traveler (Selänniemi 2003). Backpackers can be seen as rite-of-passage tourists, because they are usually young adults and they favour lengthy trips that are often mentally and physically challenging. These trips are a type of, "self-testing wherein the individuals prove to *themselves* that they can make life long changes" (Graburn 1983, 13).

In an attempt to understand why leisure activities are meaningful, Beard and Ragheb (1983) developed the Leisure Motivation Scale. The purpose of the Leisure Motivation Scale is to understand better why individuals engage in, and seek leisure pursuits. The Leisure Motivation Scale is based on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which he developed in order to better understand how people make decisions. Maslow (1943) posited that there are a series of needs that individuals must meet in succession. Only as the lower-order need (such as physiological and safety needs) are satisfied will individuals seek to fulfill the higher order needs (such as love, esteem and self actualization). The Leisure Motivation Scale is used because its viability has been tested by other researchers (Loundsbury and Hoopes 1988; Loundsbury and Franz 1990; Ryan and Glendon 1998). And, most recently, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) use the Leisure Motivation Scale as the basis for their understanding of travel motivation.

In light of Graburn's (1983) suggestion of tourism as rite-of-passage, the Leisure Motivation Scale helps to identify what aspects of a trip help to foster identity development. The Leisure Motivation Scale suggests four factors that motivate individuals to pursue leisure activities: intellectual, social, competence-mastery and stimulus-avoidance (Beard and Ragheb 1983).

The intellectual component refers to an individual's desire for leisure activities involving, "learning, exploring, discovering, creating, or imagining" (Beard and Ragheb 1983, 225). The social component assesses the extent to which group or social activities are important to the traveler (Beard and Ragheb 1983). Travelers who place importance on mingling with other travelers and local residents are motivated by the social component. Competence-mastery measures the extent to which travelers are interested in physically challenging themselves and exercising their abilities. Stimulus-avoidance motives address the extent to which an individual desires to put distance between themselves and an unfavourable situation by traveling (Beard and Ragheb 1983). Stimulus-avoidance allows travelers an opportunity to regroup mentally and be alone in their thoughts (Beard and Ragheb 1983). What a traveler wants from her or his vacation and the extent to which she or he fulfills these desires will determine an individual's satisfaction from traveling.

By developing the Leisure Motivation Scale based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Beard and Ragheb (1983) demonstrated the potential for travel to help an individual fully develop her or his identity. The hierarchy of needs was also used as the basis of Pearce's (1988) tourist career ladder (Figure 2). Similar to

the hierarchy of needs, Pearce (1988) stipulated that an individual moves through phases throughout his or her traveling life. These phases are based upon the traveler's motivations at the time of traveling and can change with the individual's traveling experience and stage-of-life. Unlike the hierarchy of needs, however, Pearce (1988) argued that one could enter the travel career model at any stage without jeopardizing the earlier or latter stages.

The travel career model's strongest attribute is that it depicts how individuals' desire to travel can be motivated by different needs and is at no time fixed (Smith 2001). That being said, it is likely that as travelers gain greater traveling experience they are more likely to be attracted to fulfilling higher order needs (Smith 2001). Feifer (1985) also makes this point in reference to today's general traveling public, whom she refers to as post-tourists. Post-tourists seek many different outcomes from their trips ranging from sightseeing to fulfilling complex emotional goals, like increasing self-sufficiency (Feifer 1985, 261-8).

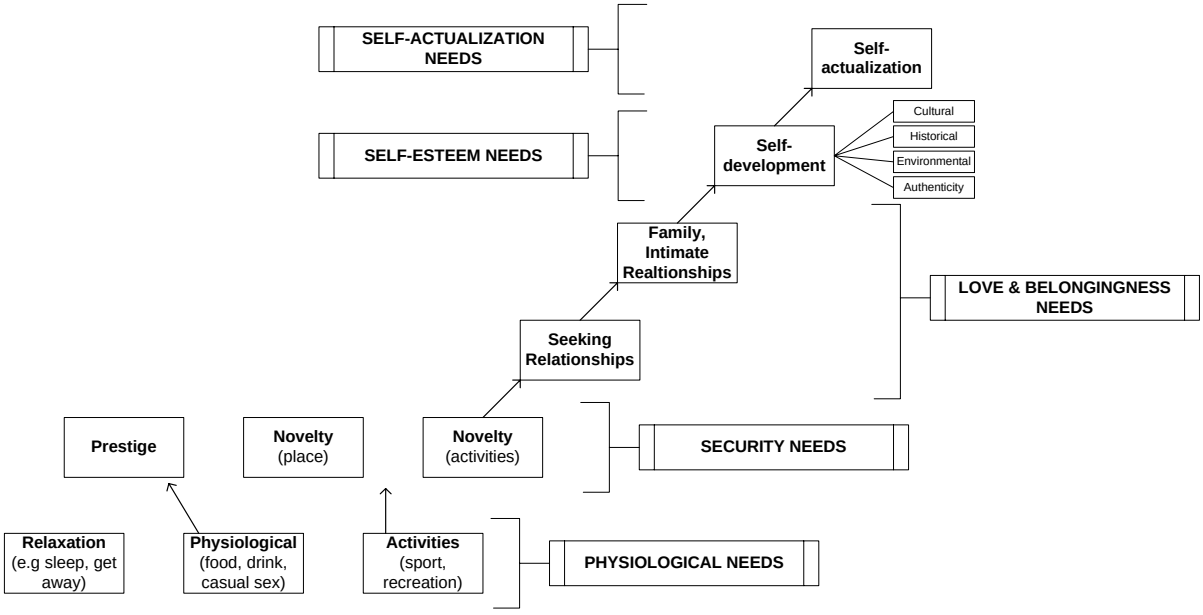



**Figure 2: Pearce's (1988) Suggested Steps in Tourists' Travel Careers**

Almost two decades after Pearce (1988) first introduced the travel career ladder, Pearce and Lee (2005) revised the ladder, suggesting that the term "pattern" would be more fitting. "Ladder", they argue, was too stringent and too strongly linked to hierarchical movement. Rather, upon further investigation, Pearce and Lee (2005) concluded that, "a travel career [is] a pattern of travel motives that change according to their life span and/or accumulated travel experiences." They go on to explain that the travel career pattern "is the dynamic, multilevel motivational structure that is seen as critical in understanding travel motivations, and it is these patterns that reflect and define careers."

Pearce and Lee (2005) found that tourists, irrespective of traveling experience, were always most strongly motivated by novelty, escape/relaxation, interaction with others, and self-development. However, when travel experience

was considered, Pearce and Lee (2005) found that participants' motives differed. Highly experienced travelers were motivated by nature-seeking and self-development through host-site involvement, such as interacting with local residents and learning about local culture. Conversely, travelers with less travel experience were motivated by novelty, personal development, self-actualization, forming new relationships and reaffirming others, nostalgia, having romantic relationships and telling others about the trip.

Comparable to the notion of self-actualization, is the concept of flow, developed by Turner (1974; 1977) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1993). Flow is a "rare state of consciousness" that arises out of "experiences that focus our whole being in a harmonious rush of energy, and lift us out of the anxieties and boredom that characterize so much of everyday life." (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, xiii). When skills are well matched to the tasks at hand, individuals can lose themselves in their tasks and "feel a sense of transcendence, as if the boundaries of the self had been expanded" (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, xiv). But as Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 4) points out, flow educing experiences do not just magically appear, individuals must be willing to have them.

The concept of flow has been applied to tourism studies by Graburn (1983) and Cary (2004). Graburn (1983) and Cary (2004) argue that tourism produces optimal times for flow to be experienced because so often tourist activities engage the whole body and mind. As Graburn (1983, 6) explains, "[flow is a] non-reflective state that is characteristic of a person who is totally and excitedly engaged in some important activity, in which action and awareness

merge, self-awareness gives way to attention focused on a limited field which the participant is engaged in mastering, a feeling which is a reward in itself, not a means to an external end."

Cary (2004, 68) argues that tourism provides individuals with easier access to flow-producing activities, such as playing games, practicing sports, making music, and mountain climbing. This is not to say that these activities are not available at home, but that traveling people are more prone to participate in these activities. Given tourism's propensity to provide these activities to tourists, and, moreover, that they are often sought out by tourists leads Cary (2004, 68) to conclude that tourism is an ideal time for flow to be experienced, "as a sacred journey, tourism foments the optimum conditions for experiencing a heightened state of being; or for experiencing the flow."

Tourism has been demonstrated to be extremely important in identity formation for many people who actively participate in tourists pursuits (Harrison 2003). For many, traveling is a period of self-testing and recuperation. For some travelers this means regaining aspects of their identity they may have felt were loss through a traumatic experience (see Hunter-Jones 2003a; 2003b, for examples from people living with cancer), or discovering previously unknown skills or traits, or separating themselves from daily activities and recharging (see Lehto, Brown, Chen and Morrison 2006, on such activities by people traveling to practice yoga, or Ateljevic and Doore (2000), Harrison (2003) Howard (2005) for examples from women undergoing difficult break-ups). Green and Jones (2005) suggest that tourism has the ability to provide identity forming experiences not

available in the paid-work environment. Their research of serious sports tourists also suggests that for these people, participation in these sorts of sports tourism is formative. Green and Jones (2005) demonstrate that people can challenge themselves and improve their feelings of self worth through their participation in serious leisure sports. An individual's participation provides opportunities to identify with a larger group, form friendships, share experiences and improve their physical well-being and skills. These attributes of serious sports tourism, Green and Jones (2005) argue, allow the participant to develop a sports tourism career and increase their sense of self-worth.

Identity formation can also be seen in the experiences of African American women traveling to Africa in the anthology *Go Girl!* (Lee 1997). These women traveled to Africa specifically seeking identity-forming experiences. Included in this book is a narrative by Nayo (1997, 231) who articulates her desire to find her identity, "My objective was to hunt down and claim an identity. I was in search of the me that was not somebody else's younger sister, or a young woman with one child who was at risk of becoming an unwed mother statistic, or worse yet (I thought at the time), my parents."

Victorian lady travelers, the most famous of whom is arguably Mary Kingsley, provides another example of the freeing power of travel for women. Feeling stifled by their confining home environment with strict gender roles, some Victorian women of means looked to travel as a way to exert their identities. As Domosh and Seager (2001, 143) explain,

> [Victorian lady travelers were o]ften in positions of power when traveling because of the color of their skin and their attachment to imperial authority, they occupied an inferior and prescribed position when at home because of their sex. … The very act of movement through space, as well as the distance that travel put between them and the strictures of home, freed some Victorian women to explore other sides of their personalities.

Therefore, by traveling, these women were able to explore aspects of their personality otherwise not possible at home.

In a more general study of the meaning of travel to vacation-takers, Harrison (2003) studied the experiences of 33 Canadian tourists. Although the participants varied in the types of trips they took, whether the trips were packaged tours or independently organized, how they traveled, whether they traveled with friends, romantic partners or solo, and where they went; Harrison (2003) found that for most of her participants, traveling provided a time for "soul searching." Traveling, she explains, provides tourists with "opportunities for self-reflection, facilitating an exploration of who 'I' really was. They could experience intimacy with themselves because many of the implicit codes, clues, and affirmation in which they live, those things that habitually confirm who and what they are, are suspended while away from home" (Harrison 2003, 86).

Elsrud (1998) and Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) reaffirm Harrison's (2003) conjecture of the potentially freeing and "soul searching" experience of travel. Elsrud (1998) studied how female backpackers constructed their travel time. Elsrud (1998, 311) found that "[t]he individual backpacker, traveling alone and having taken 'time out' from her home structure – work, friends and family ties, and to some extent even norms and values – is to a greater extent than

elsewhere left in solitude to structure both her time and her action". Elsrud (1998) further explains how women's role as caregiver colours how women think of their traveling. Even young women without children felt traveling was "… a period to gather strength and self-esteem before becoming the caring mother and wife they thought was to be their role in the future" (Elsrud 1998, 315). Gibson and Yiannakis (2002, 377) suggest that some women feel that their life dreams cannot be fulfilled due to the implications of societal obligations, such as being a mother and spouse. Later in life, when these women choose to travel, they are often able "to learn as much about themselves [as they are about the destination's culture and people] and resolve inner conflicts about unfulfilled dreams and goals."

In addition to these ways of developing identity, Deforges (1998) explains the importance backpackers place on collecting cultural capital, i.e. worldly experiences, in order to develop their identity. When researching long-haul youth travelers in the developing world, Desforges (1998) found that participants were eager to gather cultural capital. In addition to having interesting experiences, great amounts of cultural capital also encouraged some travelers to construct themselves as privileged upon their return.

> Through intellectualizing travel into the collection of knowledge and experiences rather than, for example, sitting on a beach or going to Disneyland, young travelers define themselves as middle class, gaining entry to the privileges of work, housing and lifestyle that go with that class status. (Desforges 1998, 177)

Elsrud (2001, 2005) also studies the important places in the collection of cultural capital in her studies of travel narratives by backpackers. Travel narratives, Elsrud (2001) argues, not only convey information about the travelers' experiences, but also about the travelers themselves. The choice of trip narratives told, as well as the manner in which they are relayed, "both inform narrator and listener about a particular event and symbolize something larger than the event itself: the identity of the narrator" (Elsrud 2001, 600). Elsrud (2001) found that the subjects of her study, the majority of whom were women, often framed their experiences as risky and/or adventurous. Indeed, narratives were often told in such a way as to make the backpacker seem experienced when they confront new things, "it is the handling of novelty and risk with routine that turns the actor into an adventure" (Elsrud 2005, 127).This helped to confer a sense of independence and prestige upon the backpackers thereby distinguishing them from the mass tourist (Elsrud 2001).

The importance of cultural capital is also demonstrated by Noy (2004), who studied the narratives of young Israeli backpackers. In their travel narratives, Noy's (2004) participants framed traveling as a period of personal growth and a rite-of-passage, thus enabling them to feel superior to non-travelers. Similarly, Pearce (1988, 163-4) argues the perceived authenticity of an activity or location which is of greatest importance to tourists and travelers. While both travelers and tourists seek authentic experiences, the traveler will most aggressively seek authentic experiences and be most likely to frame their travel narratives as authentic experiences.

## Tourist Destinations and Identity Development

Human geographers are concerned with the meanings of place and space. They examine how and why place influences people's behaviours; how one's physical location helps to shape one's behaviours and sense of self. It is, after all, in places where identity is exercised (Kayser Nielsen 1999). Places are infused with meaning by individuals and are constructed through power relations, "Places are made through power relations that construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience." (McDowell 1999, 4).

Kayser Nielsen (1999) argues that leisure is the best way for people to develop their identities. This is because through leisure activities individuals are able to practice place. Practicing place allows an individual to experience his or her surroundings, to move through an area, and form connections to it (Kayser Nielsen 1999). Kayser Nielsen (1999) suggests three types of relationships a person can have with place: 1. place as birthplace; 2. place as the site of experience; and 3. place as history. For Kayser Nielsen (1999) it is place as the site of experience that is the primary way individuals can practice place. Kayser Nielsen (1999) further suggests that leisure, because it is performed voluntarily and often involves physical activities like sports, is the best way for individuals to practice place (a point Krippendorf (1987) also supports). By moving through, experiencing and perceiving in a space, a person thereby creates place, as Braidotti (1994) suggests. And as Wearing and Wearing (1996) argue, this concept underlines the relational qualities of place.

Place as history is a personal relationship with a location and encompasses memories of activities, relations and possibilities. A place becomes important through the personal connection it holds (e.g. “This is where I met Sarah for the first time”). Place as history can also be noteworthy because of cultural significance having occurred in that place (e.g. “Saint Paul’s Cathedral is where Lady Diana and Prince Charles were married” or “The Colosseum is where the Romans used to watch sporting events”) (Kayser Nielsen 1999). The concept of place as history emphasizes personal judgments, whether it be to an individual or collectively as a nation: places are deemed important as the result of ideology.

Braidotti (1994) explains that public spaces are infused with cultural signifiers conveying certain beliefs of the society in which these spaces are located and are areas through which people must navigate. One example of cultural signifiers that demonstrate cultural norms of a society is advertisements in public spaces. Even if the messages on billboards do not represent the desires of unique individuals (e.g. not everyone wants to own a cellular phone), public announcements at least demonstrate what acceptable behaviour is in a given society. As individuals move through spaces they are able to choose the degree to which they want to interact with their surroundings. Thus, public spaces have significant power to affect how individuals choose to interpret these spaces.

Tourists in Europe demonstrate how their interpretation can give rise to meaning of a space. For example, a backpacker walking through downtown Berlin, Germany may see where the Berlin Wall stood and understand it as

having profound significance, symbolizing the end of the Cold War, the bridging of two nations, the celebration of democracy, and so on. Or it could be simply a place where a wall stood but no longer stands. In this way, place, through its cultural signifiers and the way these are interpreted, can play a large role in shaping leisure and tourism activities. This power of interpretation and assimilation is demonstrated by Braidotti (1994, 10), “Thus, I can say that I had the condition of migrant cast upon me, but I chose to become a nomad, that is to say a subject in transit and yet sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility and therefore make myself accountable for it.” The use of interpretation in understanding place stresses how subjective the meaning of place is (Braidotti 1994, Selänniemi 2003).

The nomad, for Braidotti (1994), is able to demonstrate the transitive nature of identity, how identity can change in any given location, for reasons discussed above, and also how these changes are carried with an individual as he or she travels through space. The nomad, Braidotti (1994, 4) explains, is “my own figuration of a situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject in general and of the feminist subject in particular.” Traveling, Braidotti (1994) argues, allows an individual to interact with different cultures, have new experiences, and situate themselves in different settings. “The nomad’s identity [therefore] is a map of where s/he has already been; s/he can always reconstruct it a posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary. But there is no triumphant *cogito* supervising the contingency of the self; the nomad stands for movable diversity, the nomad’s identity is an inventory of traces.” (Braidotti 1994,

14). In this way, identity is developed in a series of stages from experiences in different locations.

Complementing this perspective, Wearing and Wearing (1996) and Ryan (1997) argue that tourist activities take place in what they call “dynamic spaces”. Wearing and Wearing (1996) and Ryan (1997, 25) reject the notion that tourism is a passive activity of gazing on a destination (*contra* Urry 1990). This, Wearing and Wearing (1996) and Ryan (1997) argue, neglects to develop tourism into a multi-faceted experience, transforming place into a meaningful space for tourists, thereby allowing for identity development. MacCannell (2001) also argues that the tourist gaze is overly simplistic, and advocates tourist’s agency. MacCannell (2001) emphasizes that while some tourists may be simply gazing on their surroundings, there are many tourists who recognize that there is something superficial and fake about that which they are gazing upon and try to avoid tourist centres for this reason. Backpackers, in their pursuit of back regions, are one such example.

Through a feminist framework that focuses on interactions and relationships within tourism spaces, Wearing and Wearing (1996, 229-30) “posit tourism as an individual experience and interaction in a space apart from that of the everyday life of the tourist. In this sense tourism is not an escape *from* the workaday world … but an escape *to* a social space which allows for learning and growing.” Tourism space is, therefore, more than the physical setting of tourist activities. It involves dynamic social relations among people and their

surroundings, which Wearing and Wearing (1996, 229-30) argue provide an opportunity for identity development (Wearing and Wearing 1996, 229-20).

Deem (1996) examined how individuals interpret their vacation time, and found that some participants, namely some retired interviewees, had difficulty distinguishing when they were and were not on vacation. They felt, by virtue of being retired, they were on perpetual holidays. Additionally, some of the women Deem (1996) interviewed said that although they may be in a different physical setting while on vacation, they continued their domestic role, thereby blurring the line between home and holiday.

### *Liminality, The Art of Play and Tourism Activities*

This section examines what many researchers argue is the most important aspect of traveling, liminality. Liminal activities take place on the margins of everyday life and, as a result, are often contrasted with home life.

Krippendorf (1987, 15) argues that individuals are locked in a cycle of work to travel, travel to get away from work, and then return to work only to long for the next chance to go on vacation. Krippendorf (1987, 24) calls this desire to get away from it all “mental hygiene,” a term that provides a telling illustration of the feeling of many travelers; traveling is thought to cleanse the mind, body and soul. In this view of tourism, everyday life is polarized against vacation periods, the former thought to be restrictive, the latter though to provide freedom. In terms of leisure travel, the concepts of liminality and play help us to understand how and why travel seems to encourage a feeling of freedom.

Liminality is the suspension of regular activities, permitting reflection on everyday life and allowing new activities to be engaged in (Krippendorf 1987; Cohen 2000; Gibson and Yiannakis's 2002; Selänniemi 2003; Shaw and Williams 2004, 151). Shaw and Williams (2004, 151) further explain that liminal activities "appear to deny or ignore the legitimacy of institutionalized norms, values and the rules of everyday life. Put simply, the norms of holiday behaviour become very different from other patterns of behaviour. Such lucid or playful behaviour is seen by some as restitutive or compensatory, making up for home and work routines." The absence of everyday routines and the generation of a holiday routine are celebrated by most travelers. The holiday routine is, importantly, both novel and self-imposed, whereas work and home routines are repetitive and, if not imposed by others, they must meet the demands of work and family life (Gibson and Yiannakis's 2002).

For Selänniemi (2003), some travelers' apparent absence of routine – sleeping in late, eating whenever they wish and having a general lack of schedules – is evidence of liminality. Liminality, Selänniemi (2003) argues, allows travelers to experience a spatio-temporal transition/transgression, describing the physical as well as temporal disconnect between traveling and home-life. Spatio-temporal transition/transgression also suggests that liminal activities may fit with the culture in which one is situated at the time of the liminal act, although they may not be congruent with one's home culture (Selänniemi 2003). Conversely, acts can be transgressive, in that they can challenge the norms of the host society and the norms of the individual pursuing the acts, although they could be

typical of one's home environment. I found this out when inadvertently I rebuffed a server on the train in France when I asked for some jam but did not start my sentence with "Bonjour!" At the time I was flustered and embarrassed because my notion of polite behaviour was put into question, and had offended a local resident by failing to respect his cultural standards. I became acutely aware that I was no longer in Canada. Therefore, like myself, most other travelers notice the separation from everyday life and, consequently, can alter their psychological state, their social order, and their bodily state, as well as influence the ways that they perceive and experience their surroundings (Selänniemi 2003, 27).

Although Ryan and Kinder (1996) prefer the term "marginality", marginality and liminality describe the same phenomena, a period of time and a set of activities separated from everyday life. Ryan and Kinder (1996, 508) define marginality as "a construct of the interaction, the interface between that which is the dominant set of norms, and that which is subordinate." Ryan and Kinder (1996) explain that leisure travel is liminal to the extent that it usually accounts for a small proportion of an individual's total amount of time, although they acknowledge that globally, it is a significant proportion of the economy (Ryan and Kinder 1996, 509).

There are three phases to a liminal experience: the preliminal, the liminal and the postliminal (Turner 1974; Wagner 1977; Selänniemi 2003, 24; Shaw and Williams 2004, 151-2). The preliminal stage is the normal state of being where one's day-to-day routines are present (Selänniemi 2003, 24; Shaw and Williams 2004, 152). The liminal stage is when one is on the threshold between two

worlds. One is no longer a full member of their preliminal environment (home) as he or she is not physically present in it. However, the individual is unable to be a full member of the liminal location because the individual is merely passing through and lacks the permanency required to create place as history as described by Kayser Neilson (1999). The final stage of the liminal experience is the postliminal, where individuals return to their preliminal location and reintegrate themselves with it, often with greater social standing (Shaw and Williams 2004, 152). During periods of liminality, people can act differently than they would at home because, “Time is experienced as ‘flow’ without horological divisions, norms of attire and sexual conduct are abandoned, and a spontaneous camaraderie … develops among the participants.” (Cohen 2000, 359).

Although comprising only a small portion of a person’s time, liminality has significant implications for how people choose to live their tourist experiences. For some, liminality allows individuals to experiment with activities considered deviant in their home environments (Ryan and Kinder 1996). Ryan (1999, 2000) and Ryan and Kinder (1996) make this claim as they explain that tourists who visit sex workers while on vacation engage in an activity that is consistent with traditional tourism pursuits. Ryan and Kinder (1996) explain that travel is a time clearly demarcated from familiar surroundings, friends and family, employment responsibilities and reputations. This demarcation confers a sense of freedom, which allows tourists to forget about the consequences that their activities may have on their reputations at home (Ryan and Kinder 1996). Moreover, as tourists are only in the host country for a short period of time, they need not necessarily

be concerned with the long-term ramifications of their actions on the host and the host community. This detachment from personal repercussions and societal consequences is especially important when engaging in deviant behaviour, such as engaging with under-age sex workers while on vacation.

Although using the services of a sex worker is usually considered something men engage in, there is growing evidence of women traveling for sexual encounters. Romance tourism provides women with an opportunity to experiment with their sexual identities during liminality. In romance tourism, women travelers typically visit the Caribbean or Southeast Asia (Dahles 2002), and become romantically involved with local men, known in some places as “beach boys”, who work in local resorts or who otherwise find reason to interact with female tourists (Dahles 2002; Herold, Garcia and DeMoya 2001; Pruitt and LaFont 1995). The relationship usually lasts the duration of the women’s stay and usually involves sightseeing and sexual activities. Some women enjoy getting involved with “beach boys” because these men provide access to the perceived authentic local community and, in the Caribbean, because of their sexual prowess based on colonial stereotypes of black men (De Albuquerque 1998; Dahles 2002).

Similarly, Meisch (2002, 172) also observed instances of romance-tourism-like experiences as a “halfie”, half anthropologist and half adventure tour guide, in Peru and Ecuador. Meisch led white water rafting, mountain climbing and trekking excursions in the Andes and Amazon. This position allowed her to observe the interactions between guides and tourists. She found that a

substantial proportion of female tourists would vie for the attention of the often-married male guides. These female tourists were attracted to the male guides for similar reasons as romance tourists described above; the male guides were archetypes of Western conceptions of masculinity – superordinate (as he is the trip leader) and (seemingly) independent (Meisch 2002, 176).

Meisch (2002, 175) found "that liminality often involves a heightened emotional state and the opportunity to engage in non-normal behaviour, and for many clients this includes having a sexual affair." A sexual affair, despite whatever romantic relationship may exists beyond the trekking holiday, was an integral part of the trip's appeal for many guides and trekkers. Meisch (2002) witnessed women using this opportunity to transgress traditional feminine roles, whereby they became sexually aggressive.

Gibson and Yiannakis's (2002) also found that because of tourism's liminal nature, tourists enacted different behaviours than they would at home. They studied a group of 1, 277 (491 men, 786 women) American tourists ranging in age from 17-91, and examined how an individual's needs change over their life course, and how different tourist roles can meet these different needs. Overall, they found that tourists are likely to pursue tourist activities, which "they perceive will enable them to be, and do, what life back home either thwarts, or fails to satisfactorily provide for. [Thereby enabling individuals] to pursue dreams, interests, and activities which enable them to satisfy a whole hierarchy of needs, ranging from deeply meaningful goals and passions to getting away from it all to recuperate and "recharge the batteries."" (Gibson and Yiannakis's 2002, 377).

It bears mentioning that Ryan and Kinder (1996), Meisch (2002) and Gibson and Yiannakis's (2002) and this thesis, unfortunately are unable to fully explore the ramifications of tourism on local inhabitants. Questions such as, what happens when the pleasurable activities of the tourist come at the expense of local residents? Meisch's (2002) point is well taken when she describes that sexual affairs on the trail can be frivolous fun for the female tourist who has a fling with her male guide; however, guides are often married and when they engage in extramarital affairs, their families suffer the consequences of the traveling woman's new found sexual assertiveness. Likewise, the more perverse acts of sex tourism involving forced detainment, physical violence and/or pedophilia have severe implications for the hosts, yet the tourist engaging in such activities can typically avoid assuming responsibility for these actions[1].

Gibson and Yiannakis's (2002) and my study address more mainstream behaviours within tourism, but these, too, can demonstrate the tourist's privilege. Tourists, after all, are only on vacation for a short period of time and, for example, can avoid addressing the environmental effects of their stays or the underpayment of chambermaids. Therefore, the arguments made by Braidoitt (1984), Wearing and Wearing (1996), Kayser Nielsen (1999) McDowell (1999), and Selänniemi (2003), must be held in mind in when arguing for the tourists' ability to exercise their identity; tourism creates power relations which can leave the host country and its residents at a disadvantage.

[1] Although, Canada's "sex tourism law" offers some recourse. This law allows Canadian citizens to be tried for sexual abuse in foreign countries (CBC 2004).

### *Summary*

This chapter has outlined that tourism, as a voluntary activity pursued as part of someone's leisure time, has the potential to help define a person's identity. Identity was established as a means by which individuals can express their self and interact with their surroundings. Identity is developed over time and through varied social interactions where new personality traits can be learned and possibly assimilated. Tourism is also posited as a liminal activity taking place (for most) outside the boundaries of everyday live. This disconnection from home means travelers can act in different ways than they would normally without worrying about the repercussions to their reputation at home. Moreover, traveling and travel activities are easily contrasted with everyday life. Therefore, tourism, unlike more structured employment, is posited as an ideal time for identity development because it facilitates a wide variety of physical and social activities, many of which are likely to be new for the traveler. This was especially true of the Victorian lady travelers who felt especially stifled at home. Moreover, as tourism is a voluntary activity, individuals may choose to travel in order to actively define themselves, as was the case with the African American travelers going to Africa. The remaining part of this thesis will further investigate this relationship between traveling and traveling activities and the potential for identity development.

# Chapter 3 : Methodology

In this chapter I first introduce my rationale for choosing qualitative methodologies. I then describe how I selected the research participants, and how I developed and administered questionnaires to them. I also discuss e-mail discussions as a survey research method and how I analyzed the data.

## *Qualitative Methods*

Qualitative methodologies are the favoured, although not only, methods employed by human geographers (Dwyer and Limb 2001) and feminist researchers today (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002). Qualitative methodologies "allow a wide range of experiences to be documented, voices to be heard, representations to be made and interpretations to be extracted" (Smith, S. 2001, 29). Riley and Love (2000, 169) and Patton (2002, 8) explain that qualitative research is more dynamic and sensitive to change than quantitative methods because qualitative researchers deny that there is an ultimate Truth, and recognize how each person brings his or her personal experiences to his or her research.

Dwyer and Limb (2001, 6-7) outline six differences between qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research, they argue: sees the world as constantly changing, and dependent on cultural, economic, social and political processes. It attempts to "understand the lived experience and to reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities" and seeks subjective understanding through in-depth and intensive approaches. Qualitative methods further use emergent techniques so

that meanings are developed throughout the research process, and seek to create an empathetic and reflexive relationship between researcher and subject. Qualitative methods also reflect these characteristics not only in the methodological framework of the study, but in the writing and distribution of the research findings. Qualitative methods, therefore, allow for a greater intimacy with participants and more detailed experiences to be discovered than quantitative methods.

Increasing numbers of qualitative studies in tourism research have appeared in the last two decades (Riley and Love 2000, 169). For Riley and Love (2000), Wearing and Wearing (2001), and Jordan and Gibson (2004) the need to move away from quantitative tourism research is necessary in order to better understand the wants, needs, experiences and meanings of tourism to tourists as expressed by the tourists themselves. Quantitative research methods are better suited to identify broad patterns and trends, while qualitative methods provide the opportunity for participants to explain in their own words (Jordan and Gibson 2004). Jordan and Gibson (2004, 215-8) argue that quantitative research has marginalized the experiences of solo female travelers, and they therefore developed a qualitative approach using face-to-face interviews to give voice to women's experiences as tourists and to address the lack of gender biased research in tourism studies. Therefore, because I wanted to hear participants explain in their own words what was meaningful in their travels, qualitative methods were employed.

Data in this study are based on in-depth, post-trip e-mail discussions with female Canadian backpackers who traveled in Europe: a tactic Huxley (2003) in part used for her study of Western backpackers. This approach allowed participants to discuss in their own words their travel activities and the extent to which travel helped their identity development in their own words. Interviewing, as Autry (2001, 294) explains, “can provide some of the most powerful and richest data among various qualitative methods … [and] researchers who use interviewing to collect data have the advantage of being exposed to a variety of realities among participants.” Interviews conducted in this thesis addressed the concerns of Gottlieb (1982), Swain (1995), Desforges (2000), Gibson (2003) and Taylor and Chesworth (2005) who argue for more tourism research involving tourists themselves.

The data collected from the e-mail discussions resulted in travel narratives that reveal personal information about the narrator and the narrator’s identity. Narratives have the power to document backpackers’ stories of personal growth or self-change (Elsrud 1998, 2001; Noy 2004). As Noy (2004, 83) explains: “in telling stories about themselves people simultaneously describe and construct who they are and how their various experiences accumulate to form a sensible, intelligible, and communicable story of identity/biography.”

Nineteen women completed the initial interviews and of these 9 completed the second questionnaire. The e-mail correspondences from the first questionnaire ranged in length from two to 11 pages, with an average length of six pages. The correspondences from the second questionnaire ranged between

2 and 3 pages. Small sample sizes have been used in various studies where in-depth analysis was desired, e.g. Autry (2001) studied nine female participants, Freedman (1998) studied 13 women, and specifically in tourism research, Elsrud (1998) used 11 female participants, Desforges (2000) studied 15 travelers of both genders, Huxley (2003) studied 24 Western backpackers, and Birkeland (2005) studied nine travelers of both genders.

Small sample sizes have several benefits. For instance, O'Lear (1996) recommends small samples when research is being conducted by e-mail because it allows researchers to communicate directly with each participant making participants feel their contribution is important. Additionally, Desforges (1998) suggests that a small number of participants is necessary to conduct in-depth analysis, especially given the complexity of identity development research. Despite these benefits, a small sample limits the applicability of the findings to the broader backpacking community. However, as Herold, Garcia and DeMoya (2001, 981-2) point out, small sample sizes are still valuable in that they can point to potential trends: "the intent was to use the resulting descriptive data as a means to identify issues, concerns, and potential trends

### *Participant Characteristics*

After receiving ethics clearance from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo (Appendix 1) to conduct this study, I began to recruit volunteers. Volunteers were not offered monetary compensation and were recruited by two methods. Late in the spring term of 2004 posters were put up around the Faculty of Environmental Studies building of the University of

Waterloo (Appendix 2). The posters asked for women who had taken a backpacking trip in Europe to e-mail me to initiate the interview. Unfortunately, this method yielded no volunteers. This result possibly indicates that I put the posters up too late in the school term to attract interest by students who were likely thinking about exams and summer plans.

Participants were subsequently recruited through a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a type of adaptive sampling where potential participants (who are often known to the researcher in advance of the study) are approached and asked if they are willing to participate in the study. After they have completed the study, participants are asked to refer other potential participants (Ryan 1995; Atkinson and Flint 2001; Thompson and Collins 2002). In order to begin this process, I contacted personal acquaintances to invite them to participate in the study and to ask if they knew any potentially interested parties. The initial e-mail sent out to elicit participants included an introduction letter (Appendix 3) as well as a more formal information letter (Appendix 4). The original e-mail included both male and female acquaintances in the hopes that male recipients could forward the e-mail to female friends who would be potential participants. Similar to the poster, the introduction letter described the general aims of the study and asked voluntary participants who backpacked in Europe to reply to my e-mail address.

Format for the second questionnaire was largely the same as the first, however a set of follow up questions was not sent to participants. Questions from

the second questionnaire focused on what authenticity was to participants and whether or not it was important to them in their travels.

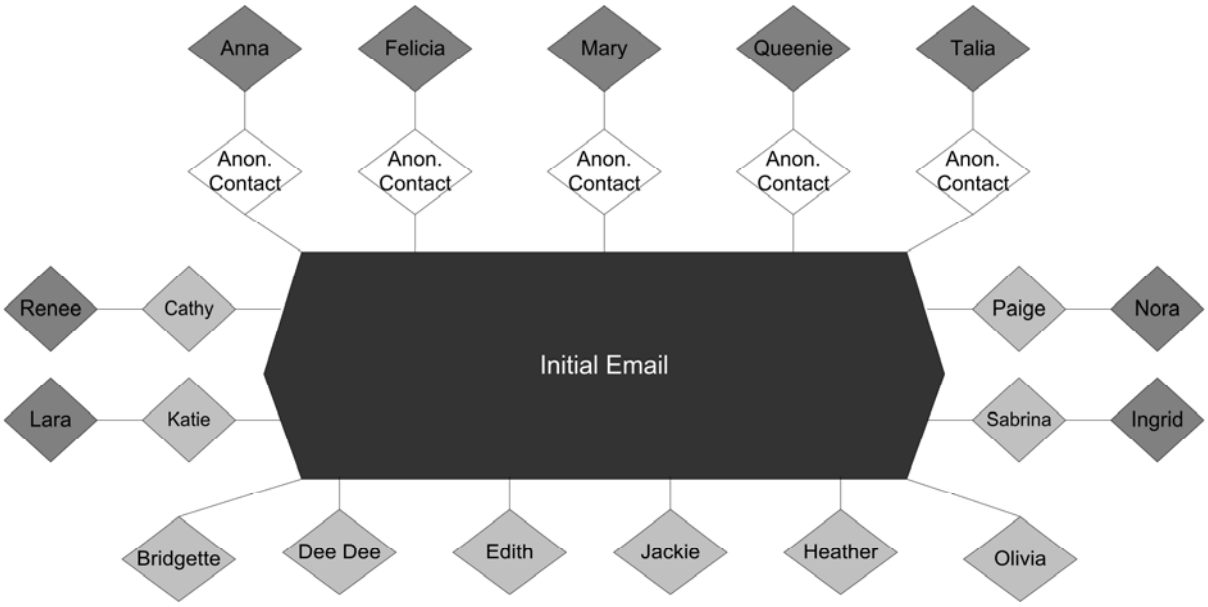



**Figure 3: Snowballing Chart**

Snowball sampling relies on individuals who are at the very least personal acquaintances. It is the method of choice where the researcher hopes to obtain sensitive information (such as illegal drug use) or to locate a hard-to-reach population (Freedman 1998; Moriarty and Earle 1999; Organista, Origanista, Balls and Bolla 2000; Hallstone 2002; Brown 2003; Browne 2003; Olley 2006). Snowballing helps to identify a focused group of people, rather than a mass mailing to anonymous recipients, so the researcher is more likely to be contacting people who were interested in, and informed about, the topic at hand (O'Lear 1996; Schaefer and Dillman 1998). Snowball sampling is also used when participants are difficult to identify and where a degree of trust must be established (Ryan 1995, Atkinson and Flint 2001, Thompson and Collins 2002).

Elsrud (1998, 2001), Noy (2004) and Carr and Axelsen (2005) employed snowball sampling in their research on tourist behaviour and the meanings of tourist activities. Huxley (2003) and Jordan and Gibson (2004) combined snowball sampling and the use of flyers to find participants for their studies.

Personal contact with the initial round of participants helped to increase the comfort level for participants, allowing them to discuss sensitive information (Schaefer and Dillman 1998, Atkinson and Flint 2001; Hallstone 2002; Browne 2003). In the current study, participants were asked to candidly discuss their participation in illegal activities (such as drug use) and/or potentially reputation damaging information (such as sexual activities). Browne (2003) reported this was particularly important in her research of non-heterosexual women. As a member of the female-non-heterosexual community, and as a friend to some of her participants, Browne (2003) found she was privy to details that heterosexuals and non-friends would not have been.

The personal acquaintances whom I initially contacted ranged from close friends (3 participants), to other graduate students and casual acquaintances (7 participants), and the other participants that were not known to me prior to the study. The use of personal acquaintances could be seen as introducing bias into the research process. As Denzin (2000) explains, friends could feel coerced to participate and may be more likely to embellish their responses in order to please the researcher. However, Browne (2003) opposes this view, finding her friends very helpful participants in her study on power relations in everyday life of non-heterosexual women. Browne (2003) employed a snowball sampling technique in

her research and began the process by contacting friends. Browne (2003, 136) found it difficult not to have her friends participate as she explains, “Questions as simple as ‘so what is it exactly that you do?’ [from friends] leads to friends either volunteering for the study or being asked to take part.” She also describes how the interviews would often lose the starched feeling of a research-and-subject interview and become a more relaxed conversation between friends while maintaining focus on Browne’s research topic.

I also encountered this same sort of enthusiasm amongst friends who wanted to participate in the research process. In fact, I had to politely decline several offers by non-Canadian backpacking friends or friends who had not backpacked in Europe. After completing the survey, if I saw participants in social settings, they often asked how the research was progressing and would add any additional information they thought relevant. Of the 28 participants in her study, Browne (2003) considered 13 friends prior to the beginning interviews; I knew 10 and they put me in touch with nine additional participants (Figure 2).

Browne (2003) describes another benefit of using friends in the research process, namely that the researcher is able to repay participants for their time and effort, even when monetary compensation is not feasible. For Browne (2003) this included helping one of her participants move after a particularly difficult break-up. Although I did not help participants move, I did find that the personal connection, being able to phone or get together with a participant and thank them personally, helped my friends understand how valuable their participation was to my work. Browne (2003) dismisses concerns about friends feeling coerced to

participate due to social ties because declining to participate was similar to declining a social activity. She also explains that friendships with other participants could have encouraged or discouraged individuals from participating; however, Browne (2003) feels this is simply part of the research process.

Because identifying legitimate female backpackers was central to this study, I began contacting known individuals or their friends and acquaintances, and used e-mail as a means of communication with participants. If I had attempted to located participants by posting notices on Internet travel web sites, I would have had no way to verify that correspondents indeed were backpackers, female or Canadian. Personal contact also helped guarantee that I got access to working e-mail accounts thereby ensuring direct contact with participants (O'Lear 1996; Schaefer and Dillam 1998). Therefore, relying on participants whom I knew personally or via a mutual acquaintance conferred an additional degree of soundness to the results.

Atkinson and Flint (2001) also explain that in snowball sampling, the researcher can be considered a member of the specific community under research. This meant participants likely identified me as a backpacker or as someone who, at the very least, had an affinity for their life style. Given the literature on the animosity between backpackers and tourists, this likely helped confer greater respect for me and the project by participants. Also, it was important to establish a degree of trust between the participants and myself as communication was done over the Internet, where information can easily be disseminated to strangers. Therefore, personal contact with participants in this

study helped increase the validity of the results and encouraged open dialogue with participants.

Freedman (1998) similarly found that personal connection was particularly important for her research on African American women's health concerns. Snowball sampling was an ideal method to garner trust, because the researcher has a sense of confidence conferred on them by participants through the participants' promotion of the study to other potential participants. This trust was essential for Freeman (1998), a white woman, researching the health concerns of African Americans who have been the victims of malpractice at the hands of white doctors. Additionally, snowballing also helped Freedman (1998) access a segment of the population that has traditionally been overlooked.

Day (1999) also employed a snowball sampling technique in her study of how race affects women's fear in public spaces. Through this process, Day (1999) identified 40 participants for her study. Day (1990) also needed to confer trust on herself because speaking to women about their race and fears requires a degree of sensitivity on the part of the researcher and trust on the part of the participant. Snowball sampling allowed Day (1990) to establish this trust.

The snowballing chart (Figure 2) shows the strategy by which participants were gathered. I had some sort of personal connection with 10 participants, either through friendships or because we were fellow students within the Geography Department at the University of Waterloo. These participants are indicated by the light-grey diamonds. Another nine participants were people whom I did not know prior to the study and are indicated by the dark-grey

diamonds. Four of these nine participants received information about the study from someone who had participated in the study. I contacted the other five participants through mutual acquaintance, such as a male who did not participate in the study. These people, people who put me in contact with participants but who did not participate themselves, are indicated by the white diamonds. In total, through the snowball sampling technique, 21 participants were identified, 19 of whom completed the first questionnaire and 9 of these completed the second questionnaire. No participants traveled together, nor I did not travel with any of the participants. The interview phase of the research concluded with 19 women because further requests for more participants yielded none.

### *E-mail Discussions*

Although I offered participants the opportunity to meet in person or to conduct the interview over the phone, they never pursued these options. E-mail seemed to be a sufficiently convenient and reliable method for both the participants and me.

E-mail discussions, and all types of web-based data collection, are relatively new forms of research and have several advantages over traditional face-to-face interviews and survey methods. Birnbaum (2004) suggests the benefits are: the potential for researchers to collect data from participants from across the world; the ability to collect information at any time; the quick delivery of surveys and supporting documents to participants; cost reduction in printing forms, storage facilities, and associated mailing and labour costs; and reduced time commitments for data coding. Creswell (2003) also confirms Birnbaum's

(2000) points four and five. Unlike other verbal interviews, e-mail discussions do not need to be transcribed because they are already in computerized print form and can easily be manipulated using any word processing software. Responses to e-mail questionnaires typically have fewer questions left unanswered and result in longer individual responses than in traditional paper questionnaires (Schaefer and Dillman 1998).

E-mail discussions also meet the components of qualitative research described by (Creswell 2003: 181-83):

1. *Takes place in a natural setting*: When participants were asked to take part in the study, they were told completing the survey would take about an hour and were asked to return it as soon as possible. This enabled participants to complete the study at their leisure, whether it be in the middle of the night or in short sessions whenever the participant could find spare time. In addition to when the study was completed, participants also chose the setting. This control likely conferred a sense of familiarity and comfort for participants not possible in a lab setting.
2. *Uses methods that are interactive and humanistic*: Participants were asked about their feelings and experiences during travel. Communication with participants at least twice typically over a period of a few weeks, allowed them to explore their answers in more depth.
3. *Emergent*: This study was partially emergent because I relied on participant's replies to tell me what was significant. By reading and interpreting data, theories, concepts and themes were extracted from

participants' responses. Although I had done some previous reading, I relied on the participants to explain what was important to them, and therefore, what should be the focus of my study. For example, while I knew the concept of authenticity was important in much of the research in tourism, initially I did not believe it was relevant to this study. However, the participants' replies showed that it was important to them and required attention.

4. *Fundamentally interpretive*: As the primary researcher, I interpret the data provided by participants.
5. *Views social phenomena holistically*: The main topic of concern for this research is whether or not backpacking aids in identity development. Backpacking and identity development are important concepts embedded within larger areas of study, namely tourism, geography and psychology. Each of these disciplines helps to inform the other and to develop a richer understanding of phenomena.
6. *Recognizes the researcher's role in and impact on the research*: Although pure objectivity in qualitative research is impossible, I constantly questioned my results and I frequently returned to the participants' comments to ensure that I have interpreted them appropriately.
7. *Complex reasoning occurring throughout the research*: Throughout the research, issues raised by participants and new publications were incorporated into the study.
8. *Adopts at least one strategy*: The strategy used in the current research

was that of the narrative. Participants' responses constituted narratives, which were then interpreted by me.

Binik, Kenneth and Kiesler (1999) found that participants appreciated the relative anonymity of e-mail when revealing information about sexual activities. Although I had some sort of personal relationship with about half of the participants, if they chose to reveal sensitive information, they did not need to feel scrutinized or intimidated by someone jotting notes down or staring at them face-to-face.

In her use of e-mail interviews, Huxley (2003) found e-mail allowed for rich exchange of ideas between the participant and researcher. Huxley (2003) also interviewed participants face-to-face, but still found e-mail a reliable and worthwhile means of communication. In fact, Huxley (2003) found most of her participants provided lengthy, in-depth replies to her open-ended e-mail questionnaire. Huxley's (2003) experience is confirmed by this study.

The e-mail discussions for this study were semi-structured. Two formal questionnaires were sent to participants. The first was comprised of16 open-ended questions (Appendix 5). These questions asked about when the participants traveled, with whom, their motivations for traveling and in what way their trip affected them. Once they completed the survey, participants returned the form via e-mail to me. After reading their responses, I sent a second set of questions to probe for further details and to clarify any points of confusion. These questions were different for each participant as they were tailored to the

individual's experiences. Once participants replied to this second set of questions, the interview generally ended, and a thank-you letter was sent. There were a few cases when I sent participants a third set of follow up questions because further clarification was needed, but the format remained the same, with a thank-you letter being sent upon completion. This completed the first part of formal questions.

Sixteen months after I concluded my first round of interviews, I followed-up with some additional questions about authenticity (Appendix 6). I sent this second questionnaire to all of the original participants, and received nine completed questionnaires in return. Unfortunately, some participants could no longer be contacted, as their e-mail addresses were now defunct, in spite of attempts to track down recent e-mail addresses of participants (such as asking mutual acquaintances without mentioning why the addresses were needed so as not to break confidentiality). Despite the small number of replies to the second questionnaire, the information gained from these interviews was helpful to enrich the understanding of authenticity.

Creswell (2003) notes that when conducting e-mail interviews it is difficult to ensure that participants complete the interviews in their entirety. In this study, repeated communication with participants, a technique suggested by Schaefer and Dillman (1998), helped to ensure a high respondent rate with only two of 21 original participants failing to complete the initial survey in its entirety.

The second potential limitation of e-mail discussions identified by Creswell (2003) is the inability for researchers to validate the authenticity or accuracy of

the responses. As is the case with any sort of research using participants, there is the possibility for participants to complete documents inaccurately. Because I communicated with participants on at least three separate occasions, this repetition conferred greater confidence in the participants' validity.

Following Noy (2004, 83) I interpreted the interviews categorically (comparing similar themes across the different interviews) and holistically (reading each interview for its own for meaning). Cross-tabulation was sometimes done in order for the effects of various characteristics, like age, or relationship status, to be demonstrated (Kozak 2002). I additionally gave special attention to the participants' reports of participation in new activities (especially with the targeted activities of sexual activities, drug and alcohol use, and adventure sports) as per my research question 1a (p. 13) in order to better understand whether they may have contributed to participants' identity development.

### *Development of the Questionnaire*

The questionnaires (Appendix 5 and 6) targeted specific aspects of the research questions. The initial sixteen questions from the first questionnaire can be categorized into five groups: participants' demographic characteristics, influence of travel companions, motivations for travel and activities pursued, identity development and experimentation, and impacts from traveling. Demographic characteristics (the first questionnaire's questions 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9) were important to ascertain because they may have influenced participants' responses. These questions did not specifically address any of the research

questions, but provided a general context to understand participants' responses. The first questionnaire's questions 4 and 5 helped to explain the affects of companions on the degree of participants' experimentation and motivations for their actions. This addressed research questions 1, 2a and 3 (p. 13).

Motivations for travel and activities pursued (the first questionnaire's questions 6, 7, 10 and 11) informed research questions 1a, 2 and 3 (p.13). Understanding the degree to which participants were motivated by a desire to have meaningful experiences while traveling was central to evaluating the impact of the trip on their identity development.

The first questionnaire's questions 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16 provided an opportunity for participants to explain how they characterized their behaviours during the trip and the meanings of these activities. The final group of questions in the first questionnaire pertained to the impacts of the trip on participants' lives (questionnaire questions 14 and15). These questions helped to inform research questions 2 and 2a (p. 13). Understanding the impacts of the trip allowed me to gage how participants felt traveling affected their lives.

The second questionnaire dealt with the characteristics of a "typical" backpacker. Previous literature on backpacking suggests that a key difference between backpackers and other tourists is the degree of authenticity sought by each group. This second questionnaire aimed to discover more about the importance of authenticity to backpackers and in what ways authentic experiences were sought. The questionnaire also asked where participants

stayed, what types attractions they visited, whom they interacted with and asked them to describe the most important memory from their trip.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis in this study was based in the grounded theory technique originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), that has been subsequently refined by numerous authors, such as Strauss and Corbin (1990), Jackson (2001), Silverman (2001), Creswell (2003) and Cope (2003). Grounded theory is an emergent investigation process where data derived from interviews are used to develop theory.

In grounded theory, the researcher identifies themes in the data, which is called *coding*. "Coding is the assigning of interpretive tags to text (or other material) based on categories or themes that are relevant to the research" (Cope 2003, 445). Coding is frequently used in qualitative research in order to facilitate comparison of participants' responses and to ensure the thorough analysis of all of the interview-data (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Jackson 2001; Silverman 2001; Creswell 2003; Ryan and Bernard 2003). Examples of coding in backpacker tourism research include Desforges (2000), Ateljevic (2001) and Noy (2004).

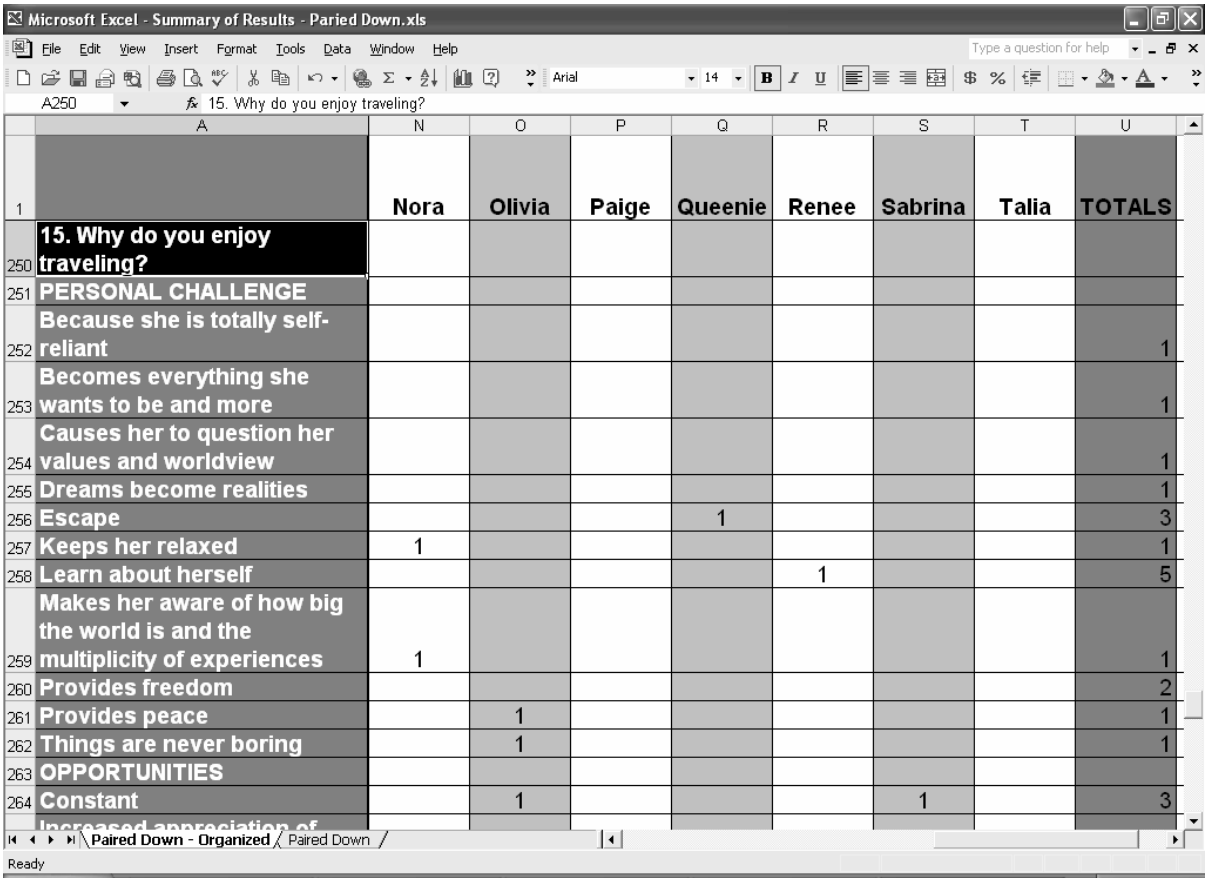
Researchers can apply different types of coding to their data; I employed open and selective coding (Glaser and Strauss 1967). However, coding is an organic process. Themes are initially developed in open coding but are refined through the coding process; this is called constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

As I went through the interviews, I assigned codes to statements made by participants, and as I continued to read the interviews and reflect on the literature I developed more precise codes, a technique employed by Willms et al. (1990), Herridge and Shaw (2003) and Ryan and Bernard (2005). For what backpackers do and who typically takes backpacking trips, I primarily relied upon Riley (1988), Beard and Ragheb (1993), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), Caballero and Hart (1996), Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002). For coding related to authenticity, I appealed to, Eco (1986), Braidotti (1994), Moaz (2006) and Muzaini (2006). For the meaning of traveling to tourists, I built on Desforges (1998, 2000), Elsrud (1998, 2001), Ateljevic (2001), Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) and Harrison (2003). For the difference between backpackers and other tourists, Selänniemi (2003), Cary (2004), Newlands (2004), Noy (2004), Slaughter (2004), and Welk (2004) were helpful.

Although using previously published literature is not strictly an emergent technique, it does follow the principles of grounded theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), Jackson (2001), Silverman (2001), and Creswell (2003). Strauss and Corbin (1990, 50-52) explain that previously published scholarship is valuable in coding new data because it: stimulates theoretical sensitivity; provides knowledge of existing philosophic writings and influential theories; and helps in the generation of research questions and survey questions. Following data collection, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 52) explain that existing literature can be used as secondary sources of data and that comparing one's findings against existing literature is essential to validate one's work and

refute existing theories. However, I had to heed the warnings of Strauss and Corbin (1990), Jackson (2001), Silverman (2001), and Creswell (2003) that a researcher must ensure that previously published material does not overshadow participants' comments. I did this by rereading participants' responses in their entirety at least three times, as well as the numerous times I scrutinized a particular comment or response. After I finished this initial round of coding I focused my attention on the most frequently mentioned themes; this is called selective coding.

In order to facilitate comparisons between participants, their coded replies were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet (Figure 4). On the spreadsheet, participants' pseudonyms were listed horizontally at the top of the sheet with questions and coded-responses running vertically on the left-hand side. Keeping each participant separate allowed me to trace how I interpreted each statement made by each participant and allowed me to easily change a response without disrupting the rest of the data. The number "1" was entered in the participants' column inline with the appropriate response. Using "1" rather than a "√" allowed me to use Excel's SUM function to calculate the total number of positive replies to any question or code.




| | A | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | Nora | Olivia | Paige | Queenie | Renee | Sabrina | Talia | TOTALS |
| 250 | 15. Why do you enjoy traveling? | | | | | | | | |
| 251 | PERSONAL CHALLENGE | | | | | | | | |
| 252 | Because she is totally self-reliant | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 253 | Becomes everything she wants to be and more | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 254 | Causes her to question her values and worldview | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 255 | Dreams become realities | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 256 | Escape | | | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| 257 | Keeps her relaxed | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| 258 | Learn about herself | | | | | 1 | | | 5 |
| 259 | Makes her aware of how big the world is and the multiplicity of experiences | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| 260 | Provides freedom | | | | | | | | 2 |
| 261 | Provides peace | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| 262 | Things are never boring | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| 263 | OPPORTUNITIES | | | | | | | | |
| 264 | Constant | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 3 |
| | Increased appreciation of | | | | | | | | |

**Figure 4: Sample Coding Chart from Excel**

Also, when I developed the codes, I tried to use the respondent's own words as often as possible in order to best preserve the participant's intended meaning. I had to code the answers' meaning in its entirety, which sometimes meant coding a single word, but in some cases it meant coding a paragraph. When participants had similar, but not identical, responses, subtleties were preserved in the original round of summarization. In instances where the participants' statements were complex and/or contradictory, I coded these responses several times, sometimes in different categories, in an attempt to

capture the full spirit in which they were written. Therefore, categories will often have a greater number of responses than participants.

I did not edit participant quotes for typographical errors nor did I remove emoticons or Internet shorthand. For example, the notation “j/j” is an abbreviation for “just joking”, indicating a satirical or comical tone. Likewise, some participants typed “smiley faces” to indicate jokes, “ **:)** “ (a plain smile) or “ **;)** “ or “ **:P** “ (a winking-smiley face and a smiley-face with a tongue sticking out indicating something a bit more cheeky or racy). In traditional face-to-face interviews, this sort of irony is noted by the change in tone or facial expressions of the speaker and interviewers have to be mindful to notice change in inflections and to make appropriate notations in interview transcripts, or else ironic or sarcastic statements could be misinterpreted (Jackson 2001). Moreover, as Markham (2005) argues, in online communications purposive typos, phonetic spelling and the use of emoticons help individuals express their individuality and develop an online personality. Therefore, as I was communicating exclusively in written form it was important to pay attention to the emoticons and the use of punctuation, as they could be markers of irony or sarcasm, etc. Therefore, unless specifically noted by square brackets ( [ ] ), the reader can assume that the participants’ have included ellipses, quotes or other types of grammatical notation in their responses. Direct quotes have not been edited for content and some contain graphic descriptions.

## *Summary*

This study employs qualitative research in order to better understand the experiences and the meaning of travel to 19 female backpack travelers in Europe. Participants were gathered using a snowball sampling technique and were given an e-mail questionnaire to initiate an e-mail correspondence about the participants' traveling experience and activities, and the meanings of these events to them. Coding was employed in order to analyses the interviews. The next chapter presents the results from the interviews.

# Chapter 4 : Results

## *Demographic Information*

### Age and Citizenship

At the time of the interview, 15 participants were 20 to 30 years of age, and four participants were over the age of 30 (Question 1 from the first questionnaire). At the time of the trip, nine participants were between the ages of 18 and 21, and six were between 22 and 25, a typical age range for backpackers. Three participants, Ingrid, Paige, and Talia took multiple trips to Europe and were therefore of different ages for each trip. Two participants did not clearly report how old they were when the traveled. All participants were Canadian citizens and all but two participants lived in Canada at the time of the interview (Question 2 from the first questionnaire). The majority of participants (12) lived in southern Ontario at the time of the interview.

### Relationship status

Most participants (14) reported being single at the time of their trip. A small subgroup of the single travelers (four) ended a romantic relationship prior to taking their trip in order to be single while traveling (Question 4 from the first questionnaire). This subgroup did not elaborate as to how being single significantly affected their trip; however, when asked if they traveled with their partner and if this affected their trip, these four reported missing their significant others (Responses from question 4 from the first questionnaire).

> No, I was not involved in a romantic relationship when I was traveling. I did have a boyfriend before I left home but we

> decided to break up because we knew I was going to be gone for a year. This did affect my trip because I missed him a lot and wanted to be with him. I sometimes even wished that I had never left home. I really wanted to share the amazing experiences that I was having with him. (Lara)

> No – though one time I was involved in short a relationship before I went traveling and ended it before I left (as it was too soon in the relationship to be "waiting for each other"). We picked back up again when I got home. (Olivia)

> There was no romantic relationship, however there was a sentimental attachment to someone. We decided since we had not been together very long we would not try to stay 'together' that summer. It did not affect my trip in any significant way, except perhaps the phone bills were slightly higher as I called him more often than my friends J (Katie)

Of the four participants who reported being in a relationship while traveling, Felicia and Talia were not in the relationship for their entire trip. Talia began her trip single and became romantically involved with a man she met en route. They returned to Canada together, got married and had four children; today, they are divorced. Felicia, on the other hand, began the trip with her boyfriend but ended the relationship three months into the trip because they were not getting along. Felicia continued her trip solo. Of the other two women in relationships while they traveled, Nora and Paige both traveled with their boyfriends and reported it positively affecting their relationship (See pages 108).

## Travel Companions

Seven participants reported some combination of traveling solo, with friends and/or with a romantic partner (Questions 4 and 5 from the first questionnaire). Six participants traveled entirely solo. Five participants traveled

exclusively with their friends. As was explained in the preceding paragraph, there were four participants who traveled with a romantic partner. One of these relationships began while traveling, one ended, and the remaining two lasted for the duration of the trip. Paige, Felicia, and Talia each took two trips to Europe. Paige's first trip was with a friend and then she returned with her romantic partner. Felicia and Talia both went alone the first time and then returned with their romantic partners (See page 106-11 for influences of travel companions on the trip).

## Trip Length

These results do not show a trend for a particular trip length, although a natural break appeared in the data between participants who traveled less than two months (8), and those who traveled for longer than two months (8) (Question 8 from the first questionnaire). Three participants (Heather, Katie and Lara) also participated in a university exchange and traveled before, after and/or during their courses. Additionally, three of the participants who traveled for over three months (Edith, Ingrid and Olivia) reported that working while in Europe, a common characteristic of long-haul backpackers as described by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000). Dee Dee also reported working while traveling on a separate trip to Central America.

**Table 2: Length of Trip**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Participants who only traveled in Europe* | *12* |
| 2 Months or less | 6 |
| 3 Months or longer | 6 |
| *Participants who took several trips to Europe* | *4* |
| 2 Months or less (both trips) | 2 |
| 3 Months or longer (both trips)* | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Participants who were on a university exchange and who traveled before/after/during this exchange* | *3* |
| TOTAL | 19 |
| *One participant, Olivia, had been to Europe twice on a backpacking trip. The second time was part of a 10 ½ month worldwide trip, with the last part spent in Europe. As the trip was of considerable length, I counted her in this section even though the portion spent in Europe may not have been more than three months. | |

Compiled from the first questionnaire's question 8

## Destinations

Fourteen participants reported traveling to 18 different European countries; five participants did not clearly articulate where in Europe they traveled (Question 7 from the first questionnaire). Of the 18 countries visited, England and France were the most popular destinations, being visited by 11 participants. Italy was visited by 10 participants, and Ireland, Spain and German were each visited by 7 participants. The average number of countries visited by each participant was 6.8.These data demonstrate the participants' preference for Western Europe as a destination. Additionally, these data shows that participants visited many of the same countries during their trip;10 of the 18 destination countries were visited by at least six participants.

**Table 3 : Travel Destination**

| **Countries Visited** | **Number of Participants Who Visited** |
|---|---|
| France | 11 |
| England | 11 |
| Italy | 10 |
| Spain | 7 |
| Ireland | 7 |
| Germany | 7 |
| Netherlands | 7 |
| Switzerland | 6 |
| Scotland | 6 |
| Greece | 6 |
| Austria | 5 |
| Portugal | 3 |
| Czech Republic | 3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Belgium | 3 |
| Wales | 1 |
| Luxembourg | 1 |
| Hungary | 1 |
| Denmark | 1 |
| *Not clearly specified* | *5* |

Compiled from questionnaire question 7

## Route Choices

In the first questionnaire, participants were asked what their route was and how they decided their route (question 7). I coded answers from this question into three themes: geographical features, pragmatic choices and advice. Mary's response to this question was fairly typical,

> Started in Paris then to San Sebastian, Madrid, Lisbon, Lagos, Barcelona, Nice, Cannes, Monaco, Genova, Pisa, Florence, Rome, Venice, Milan, Paris We wanted to see as much as we could in the time we were there so we hit the main cities and some recommended by friends and family while making a loop through the countries we had decided we wanted to visit. (Mary)

"Geographical features" were aspects of the destination that influenced the participants' decision to visit it. These were the most common reasons for participants' route choices. The most popular geographical reasons were locations of family and friends (8), famous landmarks or cities (6), and specific cultures or countries (4).

"Pragmatic choices" eased participants' itineraries and were mentioned 18 times (see Gmelch 2004). The most popular pragmatic decision was to select a route incorporating the desires of both the traveler and her companions (4). Other pragmatic choices included available time (3), ease of access (2), and train

schedule or route (3). They were similar to Harrison's (2003) concept of pacing, when travelers consider the entire length of a trip and try to intersperse days of rigorous activities with periods of relaxation.

> London, Amsterdam, Paris, Dusseldorf, Berlin, Munich, Geneva, Southern France, Playa de Piles, Barcelona, Madrid. Chose them based on the easiest route for train travel and based on the amount of time we had for the whole trip. We spent about 2.5 days in each city. (Bridgette)

Route choices made by "advice" describe the participants' decisions based upon other travelers, friends or family members' recommendations; or by guidebook recommendations. Participants mentioned advice as an influence 17 times. The most common type of advice was participants' use of a guidebook to help them make their choices (6). Of particular interest from this section is the inherent flexibility of backpacking expressed by participants. Participants mentioned two influences upon their choice of destination while en route; by taking advice from fellow travelers (4) and by meeting and joining up with fellow travelers (4).

> I relied on Let's Go: Europe for suggestions of where to stay and contact information. I also used a youth hostel guide for Europe. On occasion, I went with people who approached me at the train station. (Dee Dee)

> work opportunities, visiting family, joining up with other travelers, hearing about opportunities for study from friends, following the Lonely Planet… (Edith)

> For Europe it mostly done by using a guidebook and also had family I wanted to visit. Also, word of mouth from other travelers. (Jackie)

> I didn't really have a route, I knew what countries I wanted to see, but didn't plan it out before I left. I actually flew to Germany, got off the plane, and pretty much pulled out my map, and went from there. As I was traveling if other backpackers that I met in hostels told me of places that I should definitely check out, I would go to them. I really felt that if I planned my trip too much before I left, I wouldn't be open to the possibilities that presented themselves to me as I was there traveling. (Renee)

In the second questionnaire, participants were asked what type of attractions they visited; whether they kept to the main sites or ventured off-the-beaten-track. Of the nine participants who completed the second questionnaire, seven said they visited popular sites and six said they tried to see uncommon attractions, with five saying they visited both types of locations.

> My itinerary included a selection of well-known tourist spots and out-of-the-way towns and activities. (Brigette)

> I was only 18 at the time, so traveling off the beaten track did not have the same draw as it does now. I mostly went to well-known locales or sites. (Dee Dee)

> For most of the time when I was travelling, I was visiting pretty well-toured areas. The alps in France had fewer tourists though. While in Austria I stayed in less-touristy areas. (Edith)

Like the participants from Ateljevic and Doorne's (2000) study in New Zealand, Paige found that the public transit system in Europe did not go to

enough out-of-the-way locations as she would have liked,

> We enjoyed finding things that were off the beaten path and did so when we could. It is hard to do that without a car. We also enjoyed the more popular destinations. (Paige)

## *Independence and Identity Development*

Many participants expressed feelings of independence resulting from their trip. Indications of independence are seen in participants' experimenting with new activities, pursuing activities on their own, enjoying time by themselves, and reflecting on their at-home life. I also report how travel companions affected participants' attempts to assert independence and how some participants explained quests for freedom and the desire to escape problems at home. I also present some evidence of self-actualization and "flow" (Csikczentmihalyi 1990) as described by participants.

### Experimentation

The theory of the self as a mediator between individuals' desires and their surroundings is put forth by Mead (1967) and has been applied to tourism by Braidotti (1994), Budgeon (2003), Krippendorf (1987), Kayser Neilsen (1999) and Green and Jones (2005). These researchers argue that physical action within a space allows a person to better understand her abilities and herself, notably by being exposed to a variety of activities and events throughout her life. I consequently deemed a participant's willingness to experiment as very important.

Participants were probed about activities they pursued while traveling and the degree to which these activities constituted experimentation (Questions 10,

11 and 12 from the first questionnaire). Six participants reported trying seven activities that were totally new for them. These seven activities were flamenco dancing, glass blowing, riding a moped, mistakenly traveling on the wrong train ticket, speaking French, going to Bible school/church, and, finally, the novelty of traveling in general.

In the survey, participants were asked three times if they had experimented while they were away (questions 10, 11, 12 from the first questionnaire). Question 10 simply asked participants to report any activities they felt were out-of-character or atypical. Question 11 was more direct, asking participants if their consumption of drugs and alcohol, and participation in sexual and/or adventure sports was atypical.

In answering question 10, the broad question about atypical behaviours, 11 participants described 17 different ways that traveling allowed them to experience new things that were not readily available at home. Seeing and experiencing new things (mentioned six times), meeting new people (mentioned four times), and trying new foods (mentioned three times), are examples from this category. Being open to the opportunities available while traveling was especially important to Olivia.

> Because it gives me perspective, adventure, choice. Traveling is like an addiction, gives you a rush. You are constantly moving, testing your abilities, your skills. You are always faced with newness and freshness, nothing is boring. I love traveling because it gives me peace. It takes everyday worries out of my mind and allows me to concentrate bigger things. It gives life possibility. Time becomes inconsequential. Traveling let me fall in love with life, and everything it has to offer. (Olivia)

Nine participants reported doing atypical things; four participants reported engaging in atypical activities while traveling and five reported increased access to opportunities for going out to bars or trying adventure sports while traveling. Their responses indicate five different influences, 1) where participants had traveled to; 2) whom they met; 3) the lack of social constraints; 4) travel companions; and 5) relationship status.

The influence of location is demonstrated by the four participants who mentioned using drugs while in Amsterdam.[2]

> [O]n the graduation trip I took with my friend, we did go to that "café's" in Amsterdam and had some marijuana and found some space cakes but that was only one evening (Paige)

> At 18, I was much less inclined than now to engage in adventure sports; however, I certainly engaged in alcohol and some drug use (Amsterdam!) while traveling, especially once I was travelling alone (for the last one and a half months). (Dee Dee)

Meeting people who were interested in different sorts of activities encouraged some participants to try new things,

> Adventure sports I never did at home – I think it was lack of exposure. Europeans, Aussies, Kiwis like to have FUN. Carpe Diem is just the way of life. It suited me. Drugs I did more consistently on my travels than ever before, but I still did them at home. I had more [sexual] partners than I would normally, but that was partly just from moving around so much, and that I am a really free spirit and most of the people who travel are too. (Ingrid)

[2] Space cakes are commonly available baked goods made with marijuana.

> Yes, because you are faced with certain challenges, such as language and navigating a new city), which are out of ordinary in comparison to life at home. You are forced to adapt and learn quickly when traveling. It's liberating because to some degree no one is watching-every new person you meet has no preconceived notions about who you are and you can use that to have a lot of fun. I think you let your guard down a bit more when traveling—there aren't any expectations of what is going to happen each day on your trip because you're in it for new experiences—thus, you are more likely to do "out of the ordinary" activities. (Bridgette)

> Due to the lack of constraints of school, parents, and peer group, I definitely engaged in these activities (alcohol/drug use and sexual activity) with more abandon than I would have at home. More people around me were also drinking as they were also on holiday. Thus the frequency of drinking was higher than at home where people have school and work constraints. Because no one I knew was around, I didn't feel I had to live up to a certain reputation and could thus kiss whom I wanted without social stigma and long-term repercussions. (Dee Dee)

> I didn't engage in any adventure sports, but I suppose that I was a little more liberal with alcohol. One night in particular, while on a pub crawl, I danced a lot more freely, I didn't mind if I looked "slutty" as I would have at home. I was mainly with guys and didn't have the restraint of having female friends around to keep me in line. That same night I had sex in a public bathroom which is something I would have never done at home, even if it was with a long term boyfriend. I really didn't care because I knew I'd never see the same people the next day anyway. … I would never have done this at home because at home you have a reputation to uphold. You have to live with the consequences of your actions. Traveling in a foreign place is like putting all of that on hold, almost like living in a world that won't ever collide with your real life. (Sabrina)

Additionally, both Dee Dee and Sabrina demonstrate that their not knowing anyone in the host country conferred a lack of social constraints. Anonymity

made them feel free to act differently than they would at home without worrying about long-term impacts to their reputations and lives. If Dee Dee and Sabrina had traveled with people known to them from home, they likely would have felt some inhibition as their friend could relay stories from the trip and some of the stories might depict Dee Dee or Sabrina unfavourably.

One participant, Edith, had a particularly interesting experience, a kind of conservative rebellion. Traveling, for Edith, was the first time she was away from her family's liberal beliefs, and the first time she was able to explore the meaning of Christianity for herself. In follow-up questions, I asked Edith about characterizing her traveling experience as a conservative rebellion and how she felt her trip had shaped her as a woman.

> I would defiantly consider my traveling in Europe as a period of self-discovery. I feel like when I was traveling, and because I was traveling alone I could re-invent myself wherever I went. There was an incredible sense of freedom to explore things that I had never considered before. I grew up in an atheist environment, and had never considered the possibility of faith in God. So this was an opportunity for me to question the assumptions I had about faith. I also grew up going to Women's Day marches and volunteering at my Mom's work – a feminist press. I was surrounded by women who were vocal about equality. I has assumptions that Christians were backward thinking, narrow-minded, unenlightened, etc., etc… And then I realized that I was not as open-minded as I thought I was. Looking back I realize that I found it hard to respect women who didn't work and had traditional roles in the household. I actually still find this challenging, because it is so engrained in me that we must live up to our calling and the precedent of equality that so many women have fought for.
>
> I guess in some ways I feel like I was re-defining my gender role, but perhaps in the opposite way from others. I grew up in a family where getting married in not necessary, and thought to be kind of odd and old fashioned. So getting married at 24 was definitely a break in the expected role. As well, the choice to

> remain abstinent until marriage was thought the be rather strange by my family. I didn't think of my travels as an opportunity to re-define who I am as a woman, but more to re-define myself as a person. However, this has probably affected the way I think about being a women, and the subsequent choices I have made. (Edith)

Lara felt that she was free to do whatever she wanted while she was traveling because she was free of social constraints. However, Lara did not feel she did anything significantly different than she would have at home.

> Because I was in places where I didn't know anyone, no one that I met had pre-conceived notions about me. With every new person I met, I was given a clean slate upon which to develop an impression of myself. When I am around people that I know, I tend to sometimes act in a certain way in order to match the expectations and impressions that others have of me. Although this is not usually a conscious decision, I find that by not doing anything out of character, I avoid shocking people or changing their perception of me (not that that is necessarily a bad thing!). However, when I was traveling, I felt that I was able to act however I wanted and I didn't have to worry about saying or doing something out of character. It was interesting to notice how I acted in these situations because I feel that this revealed my true personality. In this way, my traveling experiences helped me to reflect upon my personality and enhanced my understanding of my true character. However, after saying all that, I never found that I acted very differently when traveling than I would at home. (Lara)

In response to atypical use of drugs and alcohol, as well as their participation in extreme sports and atypical sexual encounters, three participants reported that it was both partially typical and partially atypical. Bridgette and Talia, for example, report that consuming alcohol and drugs as well as participating in adventure sports was “sometimes” atypical. As Bridgette

explained,

> I definitely drink at home, but I haven't done so much "adventure sports" because of accessibility. I don't drive and the adventure sports around Montreal aren't so accessible by public transit, as far as I know. (Bridgette)

The majority of participants (13), however, reported that their participation in adventure sports, alcohol, drug use or sexual activities while traveling did not differ from their participation in these activities when at home. These negative replies are not necessarily indicative of lack of participation, because some participants said that they did not *atypically* engage in these behaviours but then would later discuss their participation. These participants possibly did not wish to appear naïve or inexperienced by simply saying that they had never done something. The 13 negative responses were typically quite short, often just answered with a simple "no" (See page 124-6).

Five participants (Cathy, Jackie, Paige, Queenie and Renee) reported that their participation in adventure sports, alcohol, drug use or sexual activities was typical for them at the time of their trip, but not today. They would not engage in the same sort of behaviours, or at least not to the same extent, today.

> At that point in my life I did drink and party a lot because I was younger. Along with the drinking and partying I was more promiscuous, so my behaviour was not unordinary. (Cathy)

> Twenty year old women and 24 year old women are very different in the way they think, act and perceive life. I now have a partner who I care for and would not go and have romantic

> flings on my excursions. I still continue to travel now but different factors motivate me to “take-off”. When I was 20 I for sure was looking to party and meet members of the opposite sex. It’s just a different time period. A fun and wild time period may I add :). (Jackie)

> Well, I'm not a total "tea toddler" I still do drink, I occasionally smoke pot and I have sex (with my husband only) however, not to the degree that I used to when I was in my twenties. I don't think it necessarily has anything to do with being 'back in Canada' but more likely it's because I am older now. (I have a steady day job and most of my social group are conservative teachers; which is a stark contrast to my University 'Pub Staff' and 'Drama' friends.) (Queenie)

Backpackers have a preference for activities they can participate in with local residents and/or other travelers (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). These events allow them to test personal boundaries and provide an opportunity for them to meet people. Some of the popular participatory events were sports and going to bars and clubs. The majority of these out-of-character activities were sports (indicated by five participants). The five participants who participated in sports cited 16 different types of athletic activities. The most popular were whitewater rafting (mentioned four times), bungee jumping (mentioned three times), and parasailing (mentioned twice).

In explaining her most cherished moment from her trip, Bridgette relays her white-water rafting experience.

> We visited Geneva, Switzerland for about two-and-a-half days. During those few days, we decided to raft down a river that flowed from Mont Blanc. We showed up at the raft station, piled into a van with the other rafters, and prepared for a day of rafting. It was a beautiful day; the water was cool and was a

> light grey colour. It was a real rush to hit the water and just go with the flow of the current. When the rafting concluded, we gathered around a few beers and snacks to warm up and talk with the guides and other rafters. (Bridgette)

## Reflecting on Home Life

The liminality of travel allows travelers to distance themselves from their day-to-day life and reflect on it (Krippendorf 1987; Cohen 2000; Gibson and Yiannakis 2002; Selänniemi 2003; Shaw and Williams 2004, 151). Some participants felt that not having to live their daily lives while overseas allowed them to learn about themselves, although sometimes they did not clearly articulate what they learned. They also reported gaining greater independence. Many participants expressed this liminality when asked if they thought of travel as a type of liberation or self exploration (Question 13 from the first questionnaire).and why they enjoyed traveling (Question 15 from the first questionnaire).

> Travel allows me to step outside my normal roles and normal context and be as open and as I want. There seem to be fewer consequences when traveling or less of a responsibility to a certain image built at home from external and internal expectations. Thus travel becomes liberating from many responsibilities at home. As well it allows me to see myself in a different context and see how I react to new experiences. Thus I can push my self, or be pushed, in new ways and grow as a result. A greater sense of honesty and self-confidence or trust seem to emerge. (Dee Dee)

> ***Question:*** Why do you enjoy traveling?
> ***Jackie:*** Learning. Escape from the daily routine. You always find more about yourself when you go away. That's how I feel.

Other participants expressed their separation from home in terms of being able to focus on their own desires rather than those of the people that surround them at home. In response to the same question, Olivia explained how formative it was to be separated from her home life. She expressed the separation as an ownership of time and space, a concept Elsrud (1998) argues is of particular importance to traveling women,

> I would definitely agree. That is how I would describe the experience – freedom. I was able to make choice based on my own desires without consideration for anyone else. I had time for myself. I spent days and weeks moving alone through unfamiliar places and confronted with unfamiliar situations. I was able to really look at myself, not as a daughter or girlfriend, or employee or student or sister or friend… I was able to look at myself outside of my normal life experience, and discover who I could be. It was a truly selfish experience, where I owned time and space. … It gives you time away from expectations and obligations. Traveling gave me a lot of time to sit, and read, and talk and wander. And many times I was my only company. Never before had I spent so much time with myself without any other distractions. I was able to go to places and meet people without any personal history, or preconceptions. I was able to rebuild. I was able to let go of things I'd been afraid of, and let out things I'd hidden. I was able to evaluate and gather traits from others which I admired. Traveling through different places and cultures tested my beliefs about how one should behave, how one should grow up, how one should live. It smashed my understanding of poverty, beauty, and duty. Traveling helped me rebuild who I am, solidify who I am, and allowed me to understand what I am capable of. I discovered that I am capable of change. Seize the day. (Olivia: Responding to question 13 from the first questionnaire)

Using travel time as a time to reflect was also expressed by Katie, Lara and Sabrina.

Definately. Most of the time I spent alone I spent in thought... the discoveries that I made about myself and how I 'work' or 'fit' with other people were things I would not have found had I stayed at home. The feeling of relying on myself alone and being totally free of anyone is really amazing... scary but amazing. Coming back I feel like I have 'grown up' but cannot describe how exactly, just that I feel like I know myself better than I did when I left.

[…]

travelling has given me a bit more perspective on issues... being away from home allowed me to reflect on things without having to be involved with them, and to figure out how I felt about my life without living it.
(Katie: Responding to question 13 and 15 from the first questionnaire)

Yes, I think traveling did help me to discover myself and define myself. When I was traveling alone, I had lots of time by myself to think over issues and contemplate things. It was very freeing to be in places where I didn't know anyone so I had to rely completely on myself to find my way around. I was forced to think for myself, make my own decisions and do what made ME happy, without thinking of anyone else. This was really important for me because I am often caught up in what other people think and what other people want to do. (Lara: Responding to question 13 from the first questionnaire)

I definitely think that it is a type of liberation and self exploration. I felt it to be liberating, because I traveled by myself and all the decisions were up to me. I had all kinds of things to do and see, and I could dedicate all my time to that and that only. I didn't worry about getting work done, it was just about doing what ever I wanted in a place that wasn't structured or routine. (Which is much what most people live like at home). It was a self exploration because I pushed myself to do things that I had never done before. Perhaps a bit of survival techniques. I discovered sides of my personality that I didn't realize that I had. (Not always good things) While in Rome, I began to adopt a more aggressive personality - I suppose to keep up with the culture and the fast paced city, but also because I was by myself and I think a protective trait was starting to develop. It scared me a little bit! I also realized that shyness when you're desperate for some sense of direction, or comfort, usually disappears. Also, I learned that I'm not always invincible and I

> do need people and family; there were times when I was lonely and sad and scared. But I think all of this made me a stronger person for getting through it. I am very proud of "accomplishing" the confusion of traveling, especially by myself. It is a real sense of satisfaction. (Sabrina: Responding to question 13 from the first questionnaire)

In addition to these experiences, when asked what had changed at home upon their return, three participants (Dee Dee, Nora and Queenie) expressed difficulties in reintegrating with home at the end of their vacation.

> Each time it gets harder and harder to live in North America when I get back. I feel I relate less and less to the average person who is all caught up in career-life… (Nora)

> When I got back I felt detached from my old life. I felt that I had changed but everything else had remained the same. I also ended up gaining a lot of weight while away and I was embarrassed to see my old friends and insecure to be with people I used to be close with. (Queenie)

## Influence of Travel Companions

Questions 4 and 5 from the first questionnaire specifically asked participants who they traveled with and how this affected their trip (Question 4 and 5 from the first questionnaire); however participants frequently mentioned their travel companions' influence through out their responses. For example, when asked how they made decisions on where to go, participants would often explain they had decided based on what their companions wanted to do. Some participants felt traveling with their friends or romantic partners was an opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen their relationship. Others felt traveling with

friends or romantic partners was limiting in some way; some participants who traveled with someone wished they had gone alone. However, not all participants necessarily thought of the companionship negatively; in some cases travel companions positively influenced participants' experiences. Therefore, travel companions both deterred and encouraged participants interests in trying new things.

**Table 4: Trip Activities Organized by Travel Companions[3]**

| | **Combination (N=7):** | **Entirely Alone (N=6):** | **Entirely with Friends (N=5):** | **Entirely with Partner (N=4):** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Number of Activities | 22 | 60 | 16 | 15 |
| Total Number of 'Out-of-Character' Activities | 15 | 14 | 3 | 5 |
| *"Nothing"* | *1* | *0* | *1* | *1* |

Compiled from questionnaire question 10 cross tabulated with questionnaire question 5

The above chart summarize the affects travel companions had on the number of activities participants pursued. The participants who traveled alone pursued many more activities (60), and were most likely to report trying something new. Participants traveling with friends or with their partner reported the fewest (16 and 15, respectively) total number of activities and the fewest number of 'out-of-character' activities (3 and 5).

The opportunity to share a special experience with friends and a romantic

[3] The total number of participants in this table is 22 because three participants were counted twice. Paige took two trips to Europe, one with a friend and one with her partner. Felicia spent the first three months of her trip with her boyfriend, and, after breaking up with him, finished the final two months alone. Talia went to Europe alone and then soon met someone and continued the trip as a couple.

partner was seen as a benefit of traveling by several participants. Participants mentioned their friends and the good times they shared throughout the study. Nora and Paige specifically mentioned traveling with their romantic partners to positively effecting their relationship. For example, Nora reported that she and her boyfriend learned about trust as a result of traveling together,

> ***Question:*** When you were traveling, were you involved in a romantic relationship at home?
> ***Nora:*** I was with a boyfriend while I traveled Europe, but not for all my other trips.
> ***Question:*** Did you continue you the relationship while you were traveling?
> ***Nora:*** We maintained relationship while on the road and often at night, he would hang out with one group of travelers and I another.
> ***Question:*** How did that affect your trip?
> ***Nora:*** It went very well. We learned a lot about trust.

Anna and Heather also had reaffirming experiences with friends as a result of traveling. Anna developed her thoughts in follow-up questions to the first questionnaire, and Heather told me of her experience when explaining her most cherished memory.

> I think Portugal had a greater impact on me only because it further emphasised how great our friendship is and plus we just had so much constant fun. (Anna)

> In paris my friend and I stayed with a friend of my who was an artist. He and his wife both painted and were helping restor this cassle. It was very beautiful, to come home after running around paris all day to a home cooked meal, a beautiful park and scilence. Watching my friend paint in the morning was

> something that we will not forget. Evenings were spend by a fireplace talking lauthing, and drinking wine and eating the most wonderful food.
>
> Another time, my friend and I had reservations in Italy, but something happened and when we got there was no room for us. The menager let us leave our things in a locker, and we took our sleeping bags and stay on the beatch. We got food from a lockal market, a nice bottle of wine, and after watching the sunset, we found ourselves a spot under the stars. Hearing the ocean,talking together, it was one of the most beautiful night that we have spend in Italy. (Heather)

Bridgette was encouraged to participate in a new, physically demanding activity because her travel companion was athletic.

> I just wanted to try something new (white water rafting) and the person I was traveling with is very sporty. (Bridgette)

Unfortunately, not all experiences with travel companions were positive, leaving several participants to express some form of disappointment of traveling with someone, usually a romantic partner. In response to follow-up questions to the first questionnaire, both Felicia, who traveled with her boyfriend, and Anna, who traveled with friends, felt that traveling with someone limited their choice of activities.

> first I would like to say that I agree with your thesis and the main reason that it likely didnt' happen to me is that I was travelling with my best friends...if I'd been travelling alone who knows how I would have behaved. I'm not saying my friends limited me, there was never a feeling of "oh I wish they weren't here so that I could..." it just meant I always had people around and wasn't going out of my way to meet others. (Anna)

> If I had gone without my boyfriend, I think I would have had a better time. I had more fun and freedom to do exactly what I wanted when I left him in Denmark. (Felicia)

Additionally, when Cathy was asked “When you were traveling, were you involved in a romantic relationship at home?” (question 4 from the first questionnaire), she replied,

> When I went to Europe I was not in a relationship with someone at home. This made it easier for me to befriend many people. Not having a boyfriend allowed me to mee guys without feeling awkward about doing so. On other trips I have traveled with boyfriends. Doing this keeps you from meeting as many people on your trip. (Cathy)

And later, when asked if she thought traveling was a type of liberation or self exploration (question 13 from the first questionnaire), Cathy said,

> When you are single yes, but when you are in a relationship you are less open to opportunities which may present themselves. (Cathy)

In response to the same questions, Felicia repeated Cathy’s sentiments of feeling confined by having traveled with her boyfriend.

> If I went now, I think I would feel free. I was confined by having taken my boyfriend and when we split up, I was already homesick. (Felicia)

Travel companions can also encourage otherwise unlikely activities. For instance, Paige’s travel companion was more outgoing and was more willing to

meet strangers. Paige does not characterize these as negative experiences, but as she looks back, she felt that her actions may have been risky. In the excerpt below, Paige compares two trips, the first with a female friend in Israel and the second with her boyfriend backpacking in Europe and describes how these relationships affected her traveling experience.

> Being single had a big impact since a summer romance was something that I was very open to. If I were involved with someone, I certainly would not have gotten involved with the French guy. Staying on the beach overnight, staying at the Israeli guys place and going to that french guy's friend's apartment were all out of character in that I am usually a pretty cautious person. I am pretty sure that we still would have stayed on the beach and stayed with those guys even if I were dating someone since I did not let involved romantically with either of them. Oh and the craziest thing was that we smoked marijuana on the beach. This was crazy because penalties in Israel are pretty serious for stuff like that or at least that was what people were saying as we smoked. I am really not sure how true it was but people were talking about how scary Israeli jails were as compared to nice cushy Canadian ones as we smoked. Smart, eh?! Those things were my friend Judy's idea and I would have followed her off a bridge that summer. I was so green when it came to travelling and she had been travelling by herself several times and had already spent a lot of time in Israel and knew her way around. so, I trusted her. She is a great girl but much more willing to take risks than me in general. I think that between the ages of 18 and 20, I was doing some adventurous/risky things since I had always been a very "good" girl. Once I got to be 20, I guess I got it out of my system and then I also met Jason at that time. I suppose that having a partner made me focus more on our relationship and less on doing crazy things. Just being out of the dating pool probably saved me from countless losers who I might have met! Now that I think about it, most of the risky things I did involved a guy in one way or another so I suppose that having a serious relationship pretty much put an end to that. (Paige)

## Quest for Freedom and Escape

The collection of travel narratives in *Go Girl!* (Lee 1997) and Domosh and Seager's (2001) writings on Victorian lady travelers exemplifies instances of when travel is seen as the best way to understand one's identity. For the Victorian lady travelers especially, traveling was one of the more accessible ways for them to define themselves away from a home environment with strict social codes. Likewise, when asked about their trips, participants sometimes mentioned searching for freedom and escaping their lives at home.

When asked what motivated their desire to travel (question 6 on the first questionnaire), most participants gave multiple reasons. Dee Dee's and Ingrid's responses are indicative of the types of replies received, and because of the multiple reasons demonstrate how I needed to code each reason separately.

> I was motivated by the desire to see new landscape, to experience and learn about new cultures-their similarities and differences-to meet new people, and to gain new experiences and out of a sense of adventure. (Dee Dee)

> Freedom. Change. Alternate attitudes about everything you once though was normal. Romance. Culture – architecture, food, extreme sports. Accents. Escape. (Ingrid)

There were a total of 27 different motives provided by participants, which I categorized as three different types of motives, "freedom and exploratory" motives, "pull" motives and "push" motives.

Participants most frequently mentioned freedom and exploratory motives. The most popular of the freedom and exploratory motives were learning

(mentioned 10 times), gaining broader/new life experiences (mentioned nine times), curiosity (mentioned five times), and adventure (mentioned four times). The responses from Sabrina and Lara, when they were asked what motivated their desire to travel, clearly demonstrate a quest for something novel.

> I have always been intrigued by the unknown, and places I have never visited were "unknown" to me. It starts to feel a bit stifling being in the same area day in and day out and not seeing anything new. I needed to grow by learning new things from traveling. Also, the excitement of having to assert independence and the freedom traveling would bring to me was a huge appeal. (Sabrina)

> I have always wanted to travel and backpack around Europe. My older sister and my two older brothers have all been traveling in Europe and this motivated me to plan a trip of my own. I am really interested in seeing new places and being exposed to different cultures and languages. I also wanted to travel because I see it as a great opportunity for learning, personal growth and challenging oneself. (Lara)

Some participants felt they were being pushed away from home because of unfavorable living conditions there. Kozak (2002, 222) explains that push factors refer to the conditions at home that make travel desirable and often involve the intangible desires of the traveler to escape. Krippendorf (1987, 24) further explains that the separation from home provided by travel allows people the opportunity to refresh themselves. Ateljevic and Doorne (2006) also found break-ups of relationships were an important motive to some of their female, long-haul backpackers.

Five participants mentioned three different push factors: escape

(mentioned four times), change from an unfortunate episode in their lives (mentioned twice), and not feeling akin to people at home (mentioned once). Participants who expressed these motives identified home as being restrictive and travel as potentially freeing. For example, Nora found traveling was a time when she could meet people like her.

> The year before my big Europe trip, my mother and I went to Vienna, Salzburg and Prague. Because of my very all-over-the-place childhood, I had always felt different than my friends. Like I had done so much more than them and didn't fit in. (Being Jewish, Canadian, speaking French, etc). But in Vienna, I was able to have hours of intelligent conversation with everyone I met—they were all older professionals from all European countries and some of them spoke SIX languages! For the first time, I felt like I fit in with these types of people and decided I needed to get as much international experience as I could. (Nora)

Another push motive for two participants was a break-up. Ateljevic and Doorne (2006) also found break-ups were strong motives for several of their long-haul participants. As Katie said, “[traveling] was a way to escape an emotional situation by distraction… to give me something to look forward to while I recuperated”. Similarly, Queenie felt that traveling was the best way to recover after ending a relationship. “It was a long term relationship at home that I was fleeing from. It had just ended and I felt I HAD to escape.” Later in the questionnaire, Queenie developed this thought,

> I think being away allowed me to escape from several things that were going on at home. I was in an awkward position in my own home, at work and at school because I had been unfaithful to my long-time boyfriend. He was so meshed into my life (we

> lived together, we knew the same people at work and we shared mutual friends from school) that I felt the easiest way to reclaim my own identity and to save face in my community would be to get away. I had really lost sight of 'who I was' because my boyfriend was a strong personality who was well liked and well established on campus. My main purpose for the trip was to "get away" but while I was in Europe I really began to realize how insignificant I had allowed my own identity to become and I consciously was doing things to reclaim it. Like being outlandish at bars, having interesting sex non-English speaking men, getting loaded, etc. (Queenie)

Although this section specifically addresses the ways participants sought out independence, a third group of factors were identified, pull factors, and will be considered next. I discuss them here because they were important motivators and should be contrasted to the other motives the participants mentioned. Pull motives were the second most popular reason for traveling. They are destination-based reasons for traveling relating to the attractiveness of the destination and refer to the tangible characteristics of the destination such as its natural environment and the quality of amenities (Kozak 2002, 222). Like the geographic factors previously discussed with respect to route choices, pull motives for the trip as a whole specifically address the attractiveness of the destination to backpack travelers. To some extent, pull factors are similar to freedom and exploratory motives in that they expressed a desire to explore the world. Pull factors, however, are coded separately because freedom and exploratory motives do not specifically address the allure of traveling, specifically backpacking, and of Europe that is demonstrated by the pull factor. Freedom and exploratory motives describe the participant’s desire to “soak-in” the world they

are visiting. The two categories are not mutually exclusive, but complement each other by highlighting subtleties found in each category.

Fourteen participants mentioned a total of 21 pull motives. Two sub-categories of pull motivators were identified: 1) Europe-specific pull motivators: specific features about Europe that encouraged travel (mentioned 15 times by nine participants); and 2) traveling-specific pull motivators: specific goals participants aimed to achieve by traveling (mentioned six times by five participants). Bridgette's response is a good example of a typical response to this category as she is clearly moved by both types of pull factors, "Had never been backpacking, and had never been to continental Europe". Europe-specific pull motivators were mentioned 15 times, and include responses such as see new landscapes/places (mentioned four times), food (mentioned twice), inspired by European musical groups/singers (mentioned once), and see famous landmarks (mentioned once).

Examples of traveling-specific pull motivators include a desire to meet new people (mentioned twice), to try backpacking for the first time (mentioned once), to have fun (mentioned once), and for romantic opportunities (mentioned once).

The final way participants sought freedom was demonstrated by their experimentation. Earlier in the chapter, I explained the importance of experimentation. I only briefly mention it here to underline the importance of it with respect to testing personal boundaries and attempting to define one's identity.

## Self-Actualization

Self-actualization for Maslow (1943) is the ability to achieve one's greatest desires and to realize one's greatest goals. Pearce and Lee (2005) apply Maslow's hierarchy to tourism, suggesting that self-actualization is one of the motives for less experienced travelers, which most of the participants in this study are. While participants were not asked about their life goals, they were probed about if and how the trip altered their identity, and where applicable, participants were also asked about how they adjusted to their greater knowledge of self (Questions 13 and 14 from the first questionnaire, and question 9 from the second questionnaire). Greater knowledge of the self is taken as an indicator of being closer to self-actualization, if not self-actualization itself.

Olivia, for instance, was able to solidify her identity through her travels. She explains this in the two excerpts below,

> I wouldn't say that Europe helped me to develop my identity. It validated it. I was able to find people who I'd traveled with, changed with, grown with. Who only knew the travelling me. I was able to meet back up with them as an 'old friend'. I was able to do 'remember when' stories. I was scared that who I'd become when I was away would disappear when I got home. I'd get caught up in the everyday and all that I'd learned about myself and all that I'd learned about the world would fade and I'd pop right back into who I was before. I knew it would be easy to do. I think Europe, for me, helped to boost my confidence that I could go back changed, and stay changed. I had recreated an identity and rebuilt my perspectives. Then I went to the UK and was able to be acknowledged as who I'd become, not who I was before (because they didn't know me then). (Olivia: response to follow-up questions to the first questionnaire)

> It was important to me because I had had these friendships with people in Australia a year ago, and because they were travel relationships, they seemed to develop very quickly. Then once I

> had not seen these people for a while, it was hard to say whether the friendships were strong. However, after visiting them in their homes and striking up the friendship again, It seems that many were lasting and it was important to establish these friendships as continual, and not just travel friends met along the way… (Olivia: response to Question 9 of the second questionnaire)

## Evidence of Flow

Feelings associated with flow are a sort of transcendence from every-day life, and an intense focus on the activity at hand (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; 1993). In a few instances participants described traveling in such a way; four examples are given below.

> There are so many, but the most cherished memories involved spending time with friends that I have not seen for a long time, in the evening, while seeing beautiful things during the day. There was nothing more beautiful, whan spending the whole day walking and sightseeing and coming home in the evening to a home cooked meal a nice bottle of wine and an evening full of conversations, lauther and singing or dancing. Similar, sleeping on a beatch under the stars after a nice meal while watching the sun set was equally memorable. When my friend and I traveled, we did not have much money, only enough, yet we felt free, happy and very ritch. We believed that were was nothing that we could not do and that everything was possible. (Heather: Question 9 from the second questionnaire)

> Those feelings: of being entirely self-reliant and free to choose what you want. The fact that it forces you to stretch yourself into new situations and meeting people that you would never have met, do things you would not ordinarily do. It is an escape from 'real life' into something that feels almost surreal. (Katie: Question 15 from the first questionnaire)

Also in describing her most cherished trip moment, Edith demonstrates a flow experience. While backpacking, Edith elected to participate in a 6 week

wilderness camp, during which time she spent 2 days camping alone; her experience is described below.

> I was taking part in a outdoors camp for 6 weeks, and one of the activities was to spend 2 days alone in the woods. We fasted during this time, and we were assigned to a small area of land that we should stay within, so that we would be on our on and not have contact with other participants. I set up a shelter with a rope and a tarp, and spent the next 2 days mostly sitting and thinking. I did some writing as well. There is one moment I remember clearly, as I sat leaning back against a rock, looking up to the evening sky, the tall evergreens towering above me. I had the hood of my jacket tied tightly around my head as it was getting cold. Everything seemed so quiet. I could actually hear my heart beat. Then I caught sight of a bird flying overhead. It had a large wingspan, and I could clearly see its wings flapping. I soon realized that the bird was moving its wings in time to the beat of my heart. I sat there and watched, listening to my heart beat to the rhythm of the birds movements. It was such a cool moment, when I felt deeply connected to the rest of creation. (Edith)

In explaining why she enjoys traveling, Ingrid describes both flow and self-actualization.

> [When traveling] I am everything I want to be and more. I am poetic, and everything around me glistens, is heightened, dreams become realities. (Ingrid)

### *Authenticity*

Tourists and travelers often search out authentic experiences, however they may define “authentic”. In one way or another, authenticity always involves exclusivity, either in product production or availability (Doorne, Ateljevic and Bai 2003), or in destination choice or experience (Pearce 1988; Riley 1998; Loker-

Murphy and Pearce 1995; Atejevic and Doorne 2000; Scheyvens 2002; Newlands 2004; Noy 2004; Welk 2004). By buying exclusive products or having unique experiences, travelers attempt to see the "real" destination, away from mass tourist attractions. To gain access to what MacCannell (1999) terms "back regions", travelers often attempt to take on outward characteristics of the hosts, such as local clothing styles, in order to be better accepted by the local residents (Muzanin 2006). There are two different types of authenticity, object authenticity, which is typically held by physical objects and events, and existential authenticity, being true to one's essential nature (Reisinger and Steiner. 2006a; 2006b). Participants exhibited attempts to have authentic experiences by: 1) discussing their interactions with local residents, 2) the types of activities they pursued, and 3) how these activities were recounted.

## Object and Existential Authenticity

Almost all participants reported that they were interested in existential authenticity, learning more about themselves and trying to live harmoniously with their capabilities (Muzanin 2006). This sort of inward-directed self-testing was evident in participants' attempts to become more independent, and when they attempted to push their personal boundaries (see page 95-119).

Some participants also discussed object authenticity, the desire to see and experience the real culture of the host (Muzanin 2006). Anna's and Mary's replies to question 14 from the first questionnaire address their desire to understand the real host. This goal was more outward-directed than existential authenticity and typically resulted in the participants learning about the host

rather than about themselves,

> ***Question:*** What sorts of things, if any, have changed in your life upon your return?
> ***Anna:*** NOTHING
> ***Question:*** Why do you enjoy traveling?
> ***Anna:*** I LOVE SEEING DIFFERENT THINGS, EATING NEW FOODS AND LEARNING ABOUT OTHER CULTURES
> ***Question:*** Does traveling help you discover yourself or define yourself? In what ways?
> ***Anna:*** I GUESS IT DEFINES ME 'CAUSE EVERYONE KNOWS THAT TRAVEL IS ONE OF MY PRIORITIES WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB OR WHAT I WANT TO DO WITH MY LIFE

> ***Question:*** What sorts of things, if any, have changed in your life upon your return?
> ***Mary:*** None
> ***Question:*** Why do you enjoy traveling?
> ***Mary:*** Visiting and experiencing different culture than I experience at home in Norht America, Nice to meet new and different people. It's interesting to see how people in other countries live.
> ***Question:*** Does traveling help you discover yourself or define yourself? In what ways?
> ***Mary:*** I feel I have more of an understanding of people from other countries now than I did before. I have a greater appreciation for art and architecture.

## Activities Pursued and How Participants Characterized Them

The first research question of this thesis (page 13) aimed to identify the activities participants pursued while traveling, including their drug and alcohol use, participation in extreme sports and/or atypical sexual encounters. Participants were probed about activities they pursued while traveling and the degree to which these activities constituted experimentation (First questionnaire questions 10, 11 and 12; Question 6 from the second questionnaire). Participants

provided a wide range of answers. Their activities were coded into four types, “traditional” vacation activities, “partying” activities, “backpacking” activities and “first-time” activities.

Participants often gave answers from multiple categories. Each response was counted once and, consequently, these groupings do not categorize the participants, but simply the participants’ range of activities. Elsrud 2005 (132) mentions a similar warning of her classification of travel narratives, explaining that individual travelers may not place themselves in her categories. The two excerpts below are typical responses to questions about activities that participants pursued while backpacking in Europe and demonstrate the need for multiple codes:

> visiting cultural sites, going to bars (limited use of some drugs), working at a youth hostel, working as a nanny, working as a waitress/house keeper, outdoor activities (snow boarding, cross-country skiing, hiking), going to church, going to a bible school. (Edith)

> Museums, beach going, cycling, hiking, walking, wine tasting, swimming, historical sights (things like the Parthenon, Ann Frank’s house, castles, churches etc.), museums and more museums and lots of eating! (Paige)

The most popular trip activities were traditional holiday activities that a total of 17 participants mentioned 29 times. This category included typical tourism pursuits such as sightseeing (mentioned 16 times), walking (mentioned five times) and trying new foods (mentioned four times). Of the traditional holiday activities, seven participants mentioned that these were out-of-character.

However, closer examination of the responses indicated that these activities were not unique for the subject but their frequency increased while on holiday. As Dee Dee indicates, “I saw many more museums and historical sites than I ever had before.”

The second most popular answer was partying activities (mentioned 17 times by 12 different participants). Partying activities included going to bars (mentioned by four participants) and drinking alcohol (also mentioned by four participants). Partying activities perhaps could be grouped with backpacking activities because of backpackers’ preference for participatory social activities (Locker-Murphy and Pearce 1995), but the partying activities have been developed into a distinct category because of the frequency with which they were mentioned by participants.

Only twice did participants (Nora and Olivia) mention that partying activities were out-of-character. Nora went to a peep show in Amsterdam with her boyfriend. Olivia, who was actively trying to change herself, reported only increased alcohol use. Most other respondents described their partying activities as typical,

> I drank in Europe but I drink here too. As for drugs—the drugs I did in Europe I have also done at home too. There was nothing new I tried. As for sexual activities, I had a few flings…maybe even more than most people. I would even call some romantic relationships. They were fun. (Jackie)

The third grouping was typical backpacking activities and 13 different participants mentioned them 15 times. Typical backpacking activities were

identified by Riley (1988), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), and Uriely, Yonay and Simachai (2002) as the participatory activities backpackers enjoy, such as interacting with local residents, working to extend their traveling holiday, sports and interacting with local residents. Seven participants reported backpacking-type activities as out-of-character. The majority of these out-of-character activities were sports (indicated by five participants). The five participants who participated in sports cited 16 different types of sporting activities. The most popular were whitewater rafting (mentioned four times), bungee jumping (mentioned three times), and parasailing (mentioned twice).

The fourth category, 'first time' (mentioned seven times by six participants), clearly speaks to participants' experimentation while traveling. I coded these activities separately because participants specifically characterized them as the first time they had tried an activity. As would be expected, all of these activities were reported as out-of-character. In fact, there were slightly more out-of-character activities reported (mentioned seven times) than there were participants who mentioned pursing first-time activities. Responses in this category range from experimentation with local customs such as flamenco dancing or topless sun tanning, to pursuing personal goals like learning about Christianity or how to be more self-confident.

> Bungee jumping, parasailing, white water rafting, sailing, flamenco dancing, glass blowing, Just about anything on offer (Talia)

> There are many things that I have tried. Different kinds of food for starters. Sleeping on a beach, since the hostal was overbooked.
> Drank wine on the train. Managed to get from Hungary to Germany on a wrong ticket and have not been caught. It happened by accident. Slept on a dinning room flor in a hotel in France, since my friend was robed. Went to a streetcar party in Germany. (Heather)

Four participants reported not to have done anything out-of-character while traveling. These responses were short, usually responding with “no”.

Although participants often denied participation, a full reading of their transcript reveals that they often did participate in one or more of the activities. As was previously mentioned (See page 103), 13 participants reported that their participation in adventure sports, alcohol, drug use or sexual activities while traveling did not differ from their participation in these activities when at home. For example,

> I drank alcohol while I was away, but in the same manner as I do at home. Occationally. (Heather)

> Not atypical, but I do think that when you have no one to answer to your behaviour might take on certain patterns it might not normally. (Ingrid)

> They were similar activities but more frequent and in some cases 'extreme'. I found myself less inhibited because I was in a foregin country and would not have to see people again if things went awry ;) (Katie)

> I would say that anything that I did while I was traveling; I had definitely already done it at one time or another at home. (Renee)

As mentioned with respect to experimentation, (see page 95-103) five participants (Cathy, Jackie, Paige, Queenie and Renee) said that their participation in adventure sports, alcohol, drug use or sexual activities was typical of for them at the time of their trip, but they would not engage in the same sort of behaviours, or at least not to the same extent, today.

## Interacting with Local Residents

In terms of if and how the participants interacted with local residents, their answers have been characterized into five categories: doing something unique, having a local resident act as a broker of the local culture, special encounters with local residents, participatory events, and not having the opportunity to interact with local residents. The first four can be considered participants' attempts at amassing cultural capital

Getting off the beaten track and away from mainstream tourist attractions was appealing to some participants. For instance, Paige's most cherished moments from traveling involved feeling that she was having a unique experience, "I can't pinpoint just one but what made for the best moments in general was just the feeling that whatever you are seeing is awe inspiring or unique and of course who you are with helps too." Paige continues her descriptions by recounting several of her favorite trip-moments, explaining that typically, only local residents are privy to such an experience,

> We had no idea where we were going, we just followed a map and stopped at random chateaus to taste the wine. Then we

> went to the incredible restaurant that was outdoors on the water overlooking Bordeau where they had a trapeze artist performing. Only locals ever go there and they were pretty shocked to see us there. (Paige)

Paige never substantiates why she felt local residents were shocked to she her and her boyfriend in this restaurant, or why a trapeze artist would be performing for an exclusively local audience, but she felt that the experience was in someway “awe inspiring or unique” and therefore special.

In the second questionnaire, participants were asked if they interacted with local residents (question 5). Two participants, Heather and Olivia, had stayed with friends and felt that staying with a local resident allowed them greater access to the local community.

> Yes many times especially when we stayed with friends who were natives of the places that we have visited. … We went to local clubs with friends of our friends, parties, were invited to family fanctions, helped out in stors/travel agency. … Many things were included, known attractions as well as not. While staying with friends we saw many different parts of the countries than many other tourists/students. For example, we stayed with a friend of my who lived outside of Paris in a cassle He was restoring the place. Thus, we stayed in an 18th centry tower. Since he also was an artist, we visited museums that other tourists did not know about since they were prived museums, or involved privet art collections. We visited clubs that local people spend there evenings and not the popluar clubs. Same with restaurants and spaw facilities. (Heather)

> The ones I chose were well known – London area museums etc, but the ones I went to when I was visiting people in the UK were not as well known such as Oban and countryside castle ruins. (Olivia)

A few participants described encounters with local residents as their most cherished moment of their trip. Occasionally, local residents reached out and made the participants feel like they were sharing a special moment.

> Because I met an old lady on a hill in Austria and she took me home for lunch and gave me a sketch and told me about her life in Europe. I really felt I understood something new and meaningful. (Felicia)

Cathy reported many encounters with local residents, including having a beer with two men, talking to a couple over dinner, going to a play, and attempting to play soccer. Cathy, who was traveling alone, seemed particularly willing to interact with local residents and relied almost exclusively on serendipity to dictate her activities. Below is one of Cathy's stories,

> I went to a pub for some water and 2 local young men asked me to play soccer in the park later that day. When I returned, the game was called off, so they took me to McDonalds for ice cream. I also met some boys at a nightclub one evening. One of them took me to his art school to see a modern version of Romeo and Juliet performed by his class. Later as I returned to the same city to catch my flight at the end of my trip, this guy and his friends took me to a pub for a goodbye beer. (Cathy)

Some participants said that they felt interacting with local residents was difficult either because of language barriers or lack of opportunity. As Paige explains, she gravitated to other backpackers because she felt that they were more interested in making friends because they had more free time.

> Mostly residents are not looking to socialize with tourists. It is really other tourists that are looking to make friends since they are on vacation and looking to have fun. (Paige)

## *Residual Effects from the Trip*

The final three questions of the first questionnaire (questions 14, 15 and 16) asked participants about the long-term effects resulting from their trip. Although some participants reported few profound effects, three main types of lasting effects reported from the trip were coded as: “increased contentment”, “personal growth”, and “future occupation and education goals”. Additionally, the cessation of drug use by two participants, and the pursuit of religion by two participants are examined. These long-term affects as well as the participants who did not feel there were any lasting affects from the trip are considered below.

### Increased Contentment and Self-Confidence

Most participants reported that traveling, in some way, helped them become more mature and empowered people, usually in terms of feeling more content with their lives and with themselves as individuals.

> I was much more confident and trusting in my abilities in life. I felt much more independent and strong. I also had less interest in school upon realizing all the other opportunities available in the world. (Dee Dee)

> I would say the biggest thing that changed when I returned was that I don’t mind going somewhere that I have never been before. It doesn’t scare me to get in a car and drive somewhere and maybe get lost. If I get lost I get lost, I won’t be lost forever, I’ll figure it out. I also think that upon my return I learnt that I can really do anything I put my mind to, nothing really discourages me anymore. I’m not scared to be out of my comfort zone, I’ll try anything once. (Renee)

Although participants were specifically asked why they enjoyed traveling (question 15 from the first questionnaire), they also frequently mentioned their reasoning in response to other questions. And as with other replies, participants often gave multiple reasons why traveling was enjoyable and I coded each reason separately. I coded their answers into three categories: it challenged them or helped them to fulfill personal goals (11 participants indicated a total of 18 responses), it exposed them to opportunities they did not feel were possible at home (11 participants indicated 17 responses) and it allowed them to explore geographic characteristics of the destination (seven participants indicated nine responses).

The personal challenge/fulfillment category describe participants' feelings of being personally challenged or having a greater sense of fulfillment as a result of traveling. The most popular answers in this category were learning about oneself (mentioned five times), escape (mentioned three times), and freedom (mentioned twice). Examples of these responses were given in the discussion of the Independence and Identity Development section (pages 95-119). The importance of these sorts of experiences is that they left participants feeling more secure, independent and content with their lives.

Learning about the cultural geography and history of a place was important to some participants (seven participants indicated nine different cultural and geographical reasons). This sort of learning was mainly outward directed, attempting to learn about the host's way of life. However, as Dee Dee points out, learning about other people and places also provides an opportunity to reflect on

one's self.

> I enjoy traveling because I meet so many amazing and different people. I grow as a person and discover new things about myself—as well as about other people. I love learning about other cultures and how people and cultures are similar and different. I love the adventure of exploring a new place and new situations. (Dee Dee)

Most participants said self-discovery while traveling resulted from the time they had to be introspective (28 different internally-reflective responses mentioned by 12 participants). The most popular introspective responses were increased knowledge of the self (mentioned five times), greater confidence in herself (mentioned three times) and that travel provided a reprise from usual activities allowing for more time for reflection (mentioned three times). In these responses, participants repeated sentiments of empowerment, self-reliance and contentment with who they are because of their traveling experiences.

> It taught me that who you are is good enough. When it's just you against the world, you learn to believe in yourself! (Ingrid: Question 16 from the first questionnaire)

> Like I said before, getting out of your comfort zone, and familiar surroundings, you become a different person. The real you, because you don't have those things that you think "define you" around you. And now you just have to be you and survive. That's human nature at its true core. (Renee: Question 16 from the first questionnaire)

In follow-up questions to the first questionnaire, Heather and Lara further develop these sentiments when they stated:

> I also have learned much about myself during my travels, and I believe both my personality, my character and my identity have been impacted. I am not afaird to travel, on the contrary I love it. I have learned what my limitations are, what my strengths are, and that I can handle many situations that I believed that I could not before. I believe because of my travels I approach life differently. Meaning, I live in the moment, and enjoy small things, since all of those pieces are building my past. (Heather)

> When I was traveling alone, I realized that I am capable enough to deal with difficult situations and confident enough to work through problems on my own. (Lara)

Katie and Sabrina also indicated that traveling allowed her to examine her identity, her life situation and at-home relationships because she was not fully engaged with them while traveling (see page 104-5).

### Religious Experiences

Two participants described how their trips encouraged them to explore their religious beliefs. Edith (on page 99-100 above) describes how she pushed her boundaries. Edith's experience was particularly meaningful and has affected the rest of her life.

> I have remained committed to the church, and my journey of faith has continued to build on what began during my trip. It has changed a lot about the way I view the world. (Edith)

Nora also expressed similar sentiments in the follow-up questions. She stated

that traveling encouraged her to make Aliyah[4].

> YES--travelling to all the places I have been to has indeed contributed to the person I have become today, as well as to the decisions I have made--like making Aliyah, for example (Nora)

## Cessation of Drug Use

Two participants, Edith and Paige, stopped their drug use while traveling. Edith said that when she began her trip she consumed drugs and alcohol, but stopped three months into her trip.

> During the first 3 months I went to a few bars and when in Amsterdam I smoked some marijuana and ate mushrooms. Neither of these were out of character. I did not engage in any sexual activity during my trip. I had many opportunities to try sports during the second half of my trip, and during this period I had very little alcohol intake, no drugs, and no sexual activity. (Edith)

> When I went back with my fiancee. I did smoke some marijuana but realized then that it was not something that I actually enjoyed doing so decided that would be the last time. (Paige)

## Influence of Travel Companions

Participants' travel companions seemed to affect the types of residual effects from the trip. Combination travelers, those who traveled both alone and with friends, reported the greatest number of residual effects. The combination travelers also reported a greater number of maturity and/or empowerment effects from the trip than any other group (mentioned a total of seven times). Participants who traveled entirely alone reported maturity and/or empowerment effects four

[4] Aliyah is a practice where Jewish people immigrate to the State of Israel. Israeli law permits any Jew the legal right to assisted immigration and settlement in Israel, as well as automatic Israeli citizenship.

times. Participants who traveled entirely with their friends or entirely with their partners did not report any maturity and/or empowerment effects. Moreover, these two groups had the fewest number of effects overall, those who traveled with their friends reported a total of three effects, and those who traveled with their partner reported only two. Additionally, the greatest number of participants (three of four) who reported no effects as a result of traveling was those who traveled entirely with friends. The other participant who reported no effects from traveling traveled with their significant other.

### No Lasting Effects

Although most participants thought that traveling was a formative experience, six participants explained that looking back on their trip, it was not the principal way they developed their identity.

> I don't think that travelling helps define yourself or discover yourself more than other life experiences like moving out, getting older, maturing. I think that that occurs naturally but where you go and how you go about it is an extension of how you define yourself. People travel to so many different destinations and in many ways. (Group tours, with a friend, alone, by car, by bike, by train) The choices you make to go, and the things you do are your choices and they don't solely define you or make you discover yourself, they just are part of a larger journey – defining yourself is a lifelong process. (Cathy: Question 16 from the first questionnaire)

> i think you will find as you age that it is a million small compromises, the relationships we develop with the things and people that weave in and out of our everyday lives that eventually define who we are. A trip to Europe can perhaps better define who we are not. By not choosing mnay of the adventures possible for a young person travelling alone, I saw that I was not an adventurer at heart but an enjoyer of

> small pleasures like the cup of coffee I will make in a moment. (Felicia: Follow-up questions to the first questionnaire)

> A lot of people set out traveling to "discover their self". I'm not sure exactly what it all means…but I guess if you are taking yourself out of your typical context, then perhaps it does help to you to discover yourself, because all you're really left with is you, yourself! I guess new experiences force you to exercise and acknowledge emotions or behaviours that you don't experience when dealing with the same routines day in and day out. So, yes, I guess traveling does help you discover new things about yourself. Do I think that you experience a revelation, and you finally know who you are in an experience like this? Not really, I believe that we are continually discovering and defining ourselves, whether we be traveling or not. I would hope anyway. But I wouldn't mind doing some more traveling to find out some more ☺. (Sabrina: Question 16 from the first questionnaire)

Heather added that traveling allowed her to gain appreciation of another culture, of art and architecture. And Lara said that traveling helped her gain greater appreciation of her home environment.

## *Summary*

I organized the results from this study around three central themes that emerged from my coding exercise: independence and identity development, authenticity, and residual effects from the trip. Independence and identity development demonstrated a participant's pursuit of activities and time alone that helped her better understand herself and be more comfortable with her identity. Participants who expressed greater self-awareness typically mentioned time spent alone and in the absence of a daily routine. Romantic relationships, however, dramatically reduced the number of activities participants pursued and

the number of people with whom participants interacted. Nevertheless, four participants reported that traveling with their boyfriends was especially meaningful and helped them learn about trust.

Some of the participants demonstrated authenticity through the activities they pursued and in how they characterized these activities. Interacting with local residents and getting off the beaten track were ways in which some participants sought authentic experiences. Additionally, the way participants characterized their activities by denying that they were doing something out-of-character also indicated their desire for personal authenticity. The participants who sought independence and tried to push their personal boundaries were particularly motivated to extend their sense of personal authenticity. This being said, participants did not seem extremely motivated to see the “real” Europe, rarely mentioning that they were disappointed with commercialization or the lack of interaction with local residents. When compared to existential authenticity, object authenticity seems have been less of a concern for most participants.

Most participants reported feeling increased contentment and self-confidence from their traveling experience as the result of confronting and overcoming unexpected problems (like an overbooked hostel); spending periods of time alone reflecting on home life; and simply navigating through and completing the trip. A few participants also noted that they stopped using drugs as a result of their trip. Two participants also mentioned that their travels encouraged them to pursue religion. And at least one participant realized that

traveling was not for her, preferring the comfort and familiarity of home. The next section explores the implications of these results.

# Chapter 5 : Discussion and Conclusions

The original aim of this study was to examine the activities of female backpackers in Europe and the extent to which these activities aided identity development. The first research question was: (1) what activities do women pursue while backpacking in Europe; and (1a) do women experiment with, or increase their drug and alcohol use, participate in extreme sports, and/or have atypical sexual encounters. I also asked (2) if these activities contribute to identity formation in women, and (2a) if identity formation took place, how was it manifested. Finally, I asked (3) what specific aspects of traveling and of the destination allow for identity development. The results from the study demonstrate that identity formation indeed took place during the participants' backpacking trips to Europe and that it occurred through a variety of means. While identity development sometimes took place as a result of risky behaviours, identity development was most often articulated by participants in terms of the wide range of experiences that they engaged in, the time they spent alone, and the challenges they faced during their trip.

Braidotti (1994) argued that identity is closely tied to the experiences one has in a given location. As someone who traveled extensively, Braidotti (1994) used her own experiences to describe the "nomadic identity". "The nomad's identity is a map of where s/he has already been; s/he can always reconstruct it a posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary. But there is no triumphant *cogito* supervising the contingency of the self; the nomad stands for movable diversity, the nomad's identity is an inventory of traces." (Braidotti 1994, 14).

Felicia (age 40) expressed a similar statement in her interview “i think you will find as you age that it is a million small compromises, the relationships we develop with the things and people that weave in and out of our everyday lives that eventually define who we are.” Looking back on her trip twenty years later, Felicia did not find traveling to be a particularly formative experience, but her sentiments nevertheless reiterate Braidotti’s (1994) point; we are the sum of our life experiences. I use these quotes to centre this chapter’s discussion of the results.

This chapter is organized around the themes of activities, liminality, access to opportunity, and authenticity. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research.

## *Activities*

The range of activities pursued by the participants was remarkably varied. Nineteen participants engaged in a total of 68 different activities, classified as traditional tourism, partying, typical backpacking, and “first-time” activities. Participants discussed their motives for undertaking a backpacking trip in Europe, citing freedom and exploratory motivations (mentioned 39 times), pull motivations (mentioned 21 times), and push motivations (mentioned seven times). Additionally, participants chose the places they visited based on geographical features (mentioned 27 times), pragmatic choices (mentioned 18 times) and advice choices (mentioned 17 times).

The wide range of activities participants chose to pursue and the range of motivations for participating in these activities supports Uriely, Yonay and

Simchai's (2002) claims that tourists often express varied motivates for pursuing activities and the meanings of these activities. Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) also suggest that over the course of a trip, tourists can satisfy multiple desires. Moreover, as Feifer (1985) suggests, seeking a wide variety of participatory activities is characteristic of the post-tourist.

Contrary to expectations, most participants did not engage in activities defined as risky (drugs, alcohol, extreme sports or sex) as much as conventional tourist activities such as sightseeing, walking and shopping. This result seems to question Uriely, Yonay and Simanchi's (2002) argument that non-institutionalized travelers differ from institutionalized tourists in the activities they pursue, rather than in their attitudes towards traveling. However, the popularity of traditional tourist activities among my research participants does support Shaw and Williams (2004), Noy (2004) and Welk (2004) who argue that non-institutionalized travelers are becoming increasingly institutionalized.

Traveling was a meaningful experience for most of the participants, as 16 of the 19 participants in this study said traveling was an important way to learn about themselves. The most popular effects of traveling on their lives related to increased maturity and empowerment. Additionally, when asked why they found traveling enjoyable 11 participants indicated 18 times that traveling helped them fulfill personal goals, and 11 participants indicated 17 times that traveling provided opportunities that are not available at home. Therefore, although risky behaviours were not as common and meaningful as I anticipated, the trip as a

whole remained very meaningful to participants. This result supports Harrison's (2003) findings that all travel forms can be meaningful.

Participants' resistance to atypical or out-of-character labels was unexpected as Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) argued that backpackers tend to embrace being independent and improvising their itineraries. Participants often characterized their travel behaviours as typical of who they are. This is not to say that participants did not engage in risky behaviours, because many reported that they did (six participants reported participating in adventure sports, 16 in alcohol use, 10 in drug use, and seven in increased or different sexual activities). However, participants often did not characterize these behaviours as atypical or out-of-character. It seemed that labeling their activities as atypical or out-of-character held negative connotations for participants, as they preferred to characterize their behaviours as an extension of who they are. "[S]o either I tried things out of character, or I was finally allowed to expose my character, finally allowed to let her out." (Olivia)

Although my results do not indicate why participants resisted the "atypical" label, I offer four suggestions as to why this might have occurred. First, the resistance to labeling their travel activities as "atypical" could be attributed to participants' desire not to be seen as a naïve or inexperienced tourist. Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002), Noy (2004), Welk (2004), Howard (2005) and Muzaini (2006) discuss at length the distinction between the 'tourist' and 'traveler'; the latter often holding marked contempt for the former. The term "tourists" to many self described "travelers" conjures up images of inexperienced,

inauthentic people who only enjoy the superficial aspects of traveling. On the other hand, travelers see themselves as more in tune with local inhabitants and seek out seemingly authentic experiences; authenticity, or at least the appearance of authenticity, is of utmost importance. Welk (2004) argues that travelers' contempt of superficial package tourism, perhaps more than any other characteristic, unites backpackers. This distinction harkens back to Cohen's (1972) original classification of organized mass-tourist, individual mass-tourist, explorer and drifter.

Second, the low response rate to "atypical" or "out-of-character" labels could indicate that the participants saw their behaviours as extensions of their "at home" behaviours. McKercher and Bauer (2003) found that often travelers would act as they would at home except in an exaggerated fashion. For example, travelers who drank alcohol at home once a week may more frequently drink to the point of intoxication while traveling. The same could have been true for some of the participants in this study and likely contributed to the low response rate to questions about atypical behaviours.

Howard (2005) suggests a third potential reason for the resistance to the atypical label. Few participants in his study said that they went to Khaosan Road in Thailand to "party". Apparently some of Howard's (2005) participants did party, but did not report it as their primary purpose of their journey, even if they did it every night after sightseeing. Likewise, the participants in my study could have omitted occasions when they did something in excess like drinking because it

was not of central importance to them, i.e. the hangover the next morning at the Louvre was simply a minor part of the sightseeing experience.

Braidotti (1984), Kayser Nielson (1999) and McDowell (1999) discuss the fluidity and instability of identities. If identities are not stable, it follows that an individual can characterize her actions as atypical at one time but later as typical for her. This dynamic nature of identity was clearly demonstrated by the five participants (Cathy, Jackie, Paige, Queenie and Renee) who reported they would not engage in the same sort of behaviours if they traveled today.

Most participants explained they did not feel they fundamentally changed their identity by traveling, but that they experimented with new aspects of their identity while away. Such participants saw their activities as extensions of their identity. For example, compare the responses of Olivia and Ingrid to the question "Did you try anything new or do something out of your character?" (Question 10 from the first questionnaire). Olivia said she did while Ingrid said she did not. Both, however, express similar experiences of self-exploration.

> I suppose I did, but I have found that it became my character. When I left I was relatively shy around new people, responsible, conservative – but wanting to change this. When I was away I was free from all my roles and responsibilities… I learned how to walk into a room full of strangers and introduce myself, how to be irresponsible – as there were no consequences, how to jump out of an perfectly good airplane… so either I tried things out of character, or I was finally allowed to expose my character, finally allowed to let her out. (Olivia)

> Heaps of stuff. Paragliding, Hanggliding, River rafting, river sledging, canyoning, canyon jump, bungee, ocean kayaking, cliff diving, skydiving, mountain biking – they were all new but not out of character. (Ingrid)

Although participants may have shied away from stating that something was an atypical activity, many participants said they took part in various types of "partying" activities (mentioned 17 times by 12 participants). This popularity can be partly explained by the reputation of many European bars as being 'no holds barred' atmospheres. As the popular budget travel guide *Let's Go* explains, "When the museums close and the sun sets over the mountains, Europe's wildest parties are just beginning. Edinburgh has the highest concentration of pubs in Europe, but it is often overlooked for the pub crawls of Dublin. There's nowhere sunnier and sexier than the Iberian Peninsula; soak up 3000 hours of sun and 365 nights of sin in Lagos…" (Ewert 2003, 4). Ewert (2003, 4) goes on to highlight other hotspots in Western Europe's nightlife in sexualized terms, such as "frenzied Ibiza", "uninhibited Berlin", "Amalfi Coast where the bikini was invented", and "Ios which is a frat party run amok". Catering to travelers, bars are often situated near hostels providing convenient meeting places for backpackers (and a short walk, or crawl, back to bed at the end of a wild night).

The popularity of partying activities can also be explained by participants having greater opportunities than they do at home. As Olivia noted, while traveling participants had more opportunities to go to bars, "The drinking was excessive when traveling and I have slowed down now – I don't have the opportunity or the drinking buddies at my disposal as you do when you're in hostels."

Pearce's (1988) travel career ladder shows that people travel for different

reasons. Pearce (1988) suggests that travel allows individuals to negotiate Maslow's hierarchy of needs, whereby individuals are likely to seek out activities that satisfy higher-order needs as they gain travel experience. In order for travel to occur, one's day-to-day necessities, referred to as low-order physiological and safety needs by Maslow (1943), must be met. Travel allows an individual to pursue the higher order needs of love, esteem and self-actualization during a fixed period of time. Traveling activities provide a special opportunity for higher ordered needs to be actualized because most alcohol, drug, or sexual experiences overseas have fewer long-term repercussions than they would at home. Importantly, however, participants may choose to integrate lessons learned from traveling into their longer-term identities. Olivia's experience typifies these sentiments. She went away actively looking to change aspects of her identity that she did not like and took advantage of being separated from home to change these aspects.

However, Pearce (1988) points out that individuals are motivated by different things at different phases in their life and entering the travel career ladder at any point will not jeopardize latter stages. The large number of motives expressed and activities pursued by participants supports Pearce's (1988) conjecture. Pearce and Lee (2005) subsequently preferred the term "pattern" over "ladder" because the latter too strongly suggests a linear upward mobility through the stages. However, travel experience does seem to influence a traveler's motivations. Highly experienced travelers tend to be motivated by opportunities to enjoy nature, and interact with hosts and the local culture in

order to develop themselves. Conversely, less experienced travelers are more motivated by novelty, personal development, self actualization, forming new friendships and reaffirming old ones, nostalgia, having romantic relationships and telling others about their trip. Although I did not specifically attempt to compare other traveling experiences to the participants' trips to Europe, there was some evidence to support Pearce and Lee's (2005) claims. Cathy, Jackie and Paige, for example, discussed wanting to experience the natural beauty of places and learn more about themselves by learning about the hosts on future trips.

Additionally, many of the participants were highly motivated by novelty, personal development, establishing and reaffirming friendships, nostalgia, having romantic relationships and telling others about their trip; motivations Pearce and Lee (2005) associated with less experienced travelers. For instance, many participants wanted to travel to try new things, which could range from trying new foods to testing their personal boundaries. Also, identity development was important to many participants, and was often sought by making time to be alone, trying new things, and simply by being away from home. Many participants reported that they hoped these sorts of experiences would help them achieve self-actualization.

Traveling with their romantic partner brought about positive effects for Cathy, Jackie, Nora and Paige who reported feeling closer to their partner after the trip. Heather reported a similar result of creating a stronger bond with her traveling companions, but she was not romantically involved with these people. Cathy, Jackie and Paige also said that when they traveled and were not in a

committed relationship they had became involved with men they would not normally have. Paige was the only one to say that in retrospect these encounters were risky. Cathy and Paige said that they were more open to meeting new people because they were single and traveling solo.

### *Liminality*

Ryan and Kinder (1996), Kayser Nielsen (1999), Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), Meisch (2002) and Selänniemi (2003) describe tourism as a liminal period in one's life. Liminal activities are clearly demarcated experiences that differ from day-to-day activities and serve to draw a clear separation between 'home' and 'away'. This was particularly true for participants who were able to articulate a difference between their "home self" and "away self".

Liminal experiences take on three phases, the preliminal, the liminal and the postliminal (Turner 1974; Wagner 1977; Selänniemi 2003, 23; Shaw and Williams 2004, 151-2). Each participant, by definition, experienced each of these phases by virtue of traveling. The preliminial is an individual's everyday life prior to experiencing the liminal environment. For five participants everyday life had become so stressful and restrictive that traveling provided the best way for them to divorce themselves from the stress and reclaim their autonomy. Their unfavorable preliminal experience was what pushed these participants into traveling.

The participants in this study were able to articulate some specific instances of liminal behaviour for them, such as going sightseeing, trying new foods, going to clubs more frequently and/or participating in locally offered

activities. This was especially true of participants who traveled solo. The solo travelers participated in the greatest number of activities in general, and the most first-time activities. Participants also expressed liminality in traveling when they discussed how they felt separated from their responsibilities at home and how they could reflect on their home-self. Some also explained that travel was meaningful because it gave them an opportunity to negotiate new situations independently, without having to interact with their home lives. For example, to Katie, who was motivated to travel to "escape an emotional situation", the separation from home was particularly meaningful and she felt more grounded and mature upon returning. Edith and Olivia expressed similar sentiments.

The post-liminal is the period that follows a liminal experience as an individual attempts to reintegrate with her preliminal life. Although most participants felt changed as a result of their trip, most did not that feel retuning home was a difficult transition. Three participants (Dee Dee, Nora and Queenie), however, felt greatly disconnected from their friends, family and home environment when they returned.

### *Access to Opportunity*

Access to opportunity while traveling also played a significant role in determining some participants' behaviours. Despite being interested in pursuing certain types of activities such as extreme sports, many participants lacked the opportunity to do so at home. However, while they were away, participants found themselves more easily able to pursue certain activities, such as Bridgette's whitewater rafting experience. Participants' access to opportunity was influenced

by where they found themselves; for example, four women who smoked marijuana while in Amsterdam and Edith found herself in a Christian hostel and consequently explored her faith. Participants were also influenced by whom they met, like Ingrid who said “Europeans, Aussies, Kiwis like to have FUN.” Other participants expressed freedom from social constraints, such as the participants who felt free to do as they pleased without worrying about consequences.

Participants’ travel companions and relationship status significantly influenced how they perceived their access to opportunity. Participants who traveled solo reported pursuing the greatest number of activities, four times as many activities as those who traveled with their romantic partners (60 vs. 15). Nevertheless, four participants reported that traveling with their boyfriends benefited their relationships.

It also bears mentioning that travel was not thoroughly enjoyable for all participants. Traveling to Europe taught Felicia that she did not particularly enjoy traveling. Although nothing undesirable happened while she was traveling; Felicia simply learned that she prefers the consistency of home. Traveling made her recognize “the simple pleasures” available at home, specifically mentioning a cup of coffee and the blue and white Ontario license plate. Felicia did not feel inhibited by her home environment, but comfortable in and appreciative of a familiar setting. Without the experience of dislocating herself from her familiar setting, however Felicia might not have appreciated home as much as she does now.

### *Authenticity*

While no participant seemed to be overtly negative or disparaging of "touristy", a.k.a. non-authentic, pursuits, the way in which participants told their stories suggests a slight bias. Noy (2004) explains that his research participants chose which stories to tell, and which to leave out, thereby constructing an image of their trip. The preference for reporting certain types of activities tells the reader what was important to the vacation taker. In the same way, when participants spoke of their most cherished memory and mentioned that it was with a local resident, their story implied that they had a unique experience that would not be accessible to everyone.

Feelings about authenticity are also very important when vacationers describe their actions and whether or not they feel they are a backpacker or tourist. When sending promotional information about the study, I asked only for prospective participants who identified themselves as backpackers to get in touch with me to participate: therefore I assumed that all participants would identify themselves as backpackers. The term backpacker has traditionally connoted a separation between institutionalized and non-institutionalize travelers (Uriely, Yonay and Simachai 2002; Noy 2004; Shaw and Williams 2004; Welk 2004; Howard 2005; Taylor and Chesworth 2005; Muzaini 2006). There is some evidence, from this study, however, such as the popularity of particular guidebooks and the apparent lack of flexibility in their itineraries, which supports the argument that backpackers do not differ significantly from institutionalized travelers. (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; 2004; Prebensen, Larsen, and Abelsen 2002; Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002; Huxley 2003; Mohsin and Ryan 2003;

Cohen 2004; Mehmetoglu 2004; Noy 2004; Shaw and Williams 2004; Welk 2004; and Taylor and Chesworth 2005)

Of the 19 participants in this study, six specifically mentioned using a guidebook to help plan their trip. Undoubtedly, a guidebook provides invaluable information for travelers; however, by suggesting places to stay and important sites, guidebooks also channel participants to selected areas. Therefore, while backpackers may not want to be part of an organized tour, their guidebooks essentially act as tour guides. Therefore, although the organized bus trips and professional tour guides may be absent from a backpacker's journey, she, to some extent, follows in the steps of many other backpackers before her who have used the same guidebook.

Additionally, while the itineraries of most backpackers maybe flexible, one participant, Anna, said she had planned her entire route prior to leaving: "Every time my friends and I have thoroughly planned in advance (ex. where we're going and for how long)." Other participants also stated that they had preplanned at least some aspects of their trips by booking hostels or train rides prior to arrival. However, there were some participants, like Bridgette, Jackie and Olivia, who did change their planned routes to join up with people they met while traveling, in more typical backpacker fashion. Perhaps, then, it is not that backpackers dislike itineraries so much as they want to be the ones to decide them, even if they might not choose to change them en route, unlike package tours with fixed schedules and destinations. This personal decision-making process could confer a sense of autonomy and self-reliance to female backpackers.

Participants in this study expressed little interaction with their hosts. Most of the local people with whom participants described speaking were typically service people, such as hotel staff or booking agents. Cathy, Heather and Paige were exceptions because they described some memorable experiences involving interaction with local residents. By and large, however, participants said that if they interacted with people while traveling it was their travel companions and other backpackers. This result is surprising given the supposed predilection of backpackers for social activities, involving the local inhabitants (Riley 1988; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Muzaini 2006). However, a few participants did say that they wished they had had greater opportunities to interact with local residents. Furthermore, interaction with local residents must be viewed as a two-way street: local residents must be approachable and interested in interacting with tourists for the interaction to occur, despite the level of interest on the traveler's part.

Additionally, the very concept of authenticity is brought into question by the activities the participants pursued. What exactly is authentic behaviour while traveling? Despite the definitions offered by (Prebensen, Larsen and Abelsen 2003; Xie 2003; Noy 204; Reisinger and Steiner 2006a; 2006b) participants in this study, they did not seem to have had experiences that locals would usually call authentic. Only one participant (Edith) sought paid employment while away, an activity much more "authentic" than the frequent alcohol consumption or museum visiting reported by participants as surely the frequency with which participants participated in these events was higher than local residents.

Therefore, while there may have been some similarities between the activities that participants pursued, seeking out remote villages or restaurants infrequently visited by other tourists, the pursuit of authenticity again seemed to either be irrelevant or done through an effort to get lower prices. As Kontogeorgopoulou (2003) asserts, amongst travelers, there is the (erroneous) perception that because something is inexpensive it must be authentic.

## *Other Findings*

### Religious Experiences

Two participants, Edith and Nora, reported that traveling allowed them to explore their faith. For Edith this opportunity was especially meaningful as she grew up in an atheist family and by traveling she was free to explore her feelings about Christianity (See excerpt on page 99-100). Likewise, Nora, felt very disconnected from her surroundings while growing up and constantly felt different from those around her. However, when traveling, and specifically when in Israel, she found people to whom she could relate. Her decision to make Aliyah arose from there, having found a place where she felt at home.

## *Conclusions*

The findings in this study illustrate the special time for identity development that travel provided for most respondents. For most of the women in this study, backpacking in Europe was a liminal experience that allowed them to pursue a wide range of activities, some of which I defined as risky, but most were not. The participants' range of activities, whether it was flamenco dancing, attending peep shows or getting lost, usually allowed them to feel greater

confidence in their abilities. Participants in this study were able to break away from their familiar surroundings and routines and were encouraged to assert their identities, especially when negotiating unfamiliar experiences (such as sleeping on a beach because hostels were overbooked or meeting new people on a train). This realization conferred a great amount of personal strength to participants as they came to know and rely on their abilities.

For the purposes of this study, a backpacker initially was defined as someone who:

- plans her own itinerary,
- desires interaction with local people,
- focuses on budget accommodations and transportation styles,
- takes long rather than short vacations,
- enjoys participatory activities (see page 30-1).

Most, participants in this study did plan their own itineraries, but many participants used a guidebook and therefore followed prescribed routes. Most participants did not extensively engage with local residents, although there were some exceptions, most notably Cathy's report of soccer and drinks. The people with whom participants most often interacted were other travelers or people employed in the tourism industry. Participants stayed almost exclusively in hostels with a few exceptions of women who stayed with friends living in Europe. Both types of accommodations were inexpensive and allowed participants to extend their holidays. The length of trip was typically longer than the generic one-week all-inclusive resorts of package tourism, but not all participants traveled for

months on end as typified by the drifter of the 1970s. Most participants were limited to a summer break and therefore travel for about 2 months, although Olivia traveled the world for 10 ½ months. The types of activities in which participants engaged ranged from conventional sightseeing and shopping to bungee jumping and whitewater rafting. Participants seemed willing to try almost anything and many relished the opportunity to be somewhere where they had the chance to try new things (like whitewater rafting for Bridgette).

Therefore, although the contemporary image of the backpacker remains as I have outlined above, this study has further supported the notion that the backpacker in Europe is not significantly different from other tourists. Indeed, while backpackers may say they tend to enjoy certain types of activities over others, yet in actuality they may not participate in activities that differ from those of other tourists. In this study, this effect was demonstrated by the few adventure sports pursued by participants and by the high numbers of participants who reporting walking, sightseeing and shopping as trip activities. Therefore, what seemed the most unifying characteristics in this study and in the tourism literature's typecasting of backpackers was where participants stayed (in inexpensive accommodations) and their longer travel periods. Different results could have been obtained, however, for backpackers in less-traveled parts of Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

E-mail surveys were an effective and efficient way to communicate with participants. Given the continually growing on-line environment, e-mail communication should prove to be an inexpensive and time-efficient means to

communicate with participants. Although care must be given to make participants feel secure in revealing personal information over the Internet, their concerns can be ameliorated by a personal connection through a snowball sampling method.

## Directions for Further Research

The results from this study demonstrate that participants were not particularly interested in interacting with their hosts. Further research on this topic would be helpful in order to enrich or to revise the conventional definitions of backpackers, specifically when and how they are able to interact with local residents.

This study uses the experiences of female backpackers from Canada. In doing so, this perpetuates the focus on Western backpacker's experiences (Teo and Leong 2006). Future research would also benefit from studying the experiences of female backpackers from different countries to address this concern. For example, Muzaini (2006) noted that racism affected his experience as a Singaporean tourist in Southeast Asia.

While this study did not examine the potential for identity development through travel for men, this would be another worthwhile study. The residual effects from my Canadian participants' trips were most often phrased in terms of maturity and empowerment; and for women, who are often socialized to be dependent, backpacking proved to be a particularly important experience. In contrast, North American men are usually socialized to be independent and adventurous. Therefore, it is likely that identity development for male backpackers will be phrased differently.

Also, comparable study on travelers to and from other parts of the world is needed to extend the results found here. The well developed backpacker routes of Europe likely lent themselves to being experienced by women as safe. This probably encouraged participants to interact with local people and to overindulge in alcohol without great concerns about their personal safety. The experiences of backpackers in contested or religiously traditional regions of the world would presumably be quite different and could take on alternative meanings. Investigation into the significance of the destination in backpacker experiences and activities would not only add to the data concerning personal development through travel, but would add to research on how place shapes the tourist experience.

This study also provided some information about how traveling alone or with travel companions, and one's relationship status can affect the experience of travel. In future research this relationship could be further investigated by more thoroughly comparing solo travelers, travelers with friends, and travelers with their romantic partner. These results may also be specific to the traveler's own culture, as noted above, or to her destinations.

This study as a whole attempted to research identity development as a result of backpacking in Europe for 19 Canadian women. Most participants in this study found that traveling was meaningful and helped them discover a more independent and self-reliant identity than they had prior to leaving. Traveling in this way is conceptualized as a profoundly significant experience for those fortunate enough to do so. Further research might profitably expand upon my

lines of questioning, as it may provide benefits for host communities hoping to attract more female tourists as an expanding market niche. Today's low-budget backpacker may become tomorrow's higher-spending tourist as younger women advance into middle age and higher income brackets. The expansion of retreats and religious heritage tourism as destinations today indicate that inner journeys may be just as important to travelers as their apparent itineraries and tourism infrastructures.

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# Appendix 1 : Ethics Clearance

From: "ORE Ethics Application System" <OHRAC@uwaterloo.ca>
To: jkg@fes.uwaterloo.ca
CC: jess_canada@yahoo.com
Subject: Full Ethics Clearance after provisional, comments (ORE # 11602)
Date: Tue, 25 May 2004 11:49:11 -0400

Dear Researcher:

The recommended revisions/additional information requested in the initial ethics review of your ORE application:

Title: Finding Herself : The Exploration of Self During Backpacking Travel for Canadian Women
ORE #: 11602
Principal Investigator: Jeanne Kay Guelke (jkg@fes.uwaterloo.ca)
Student Investigator(s): Jessica Deakin (jess_canada@yahoo.com)

have been reviewed and are considered acceptable. As a result, your application now has received full ethics clearance. However, further revisions and/or additional information are required as outlined below.

A signed copy of the Notification of Full Ethics Clearance will be sent to the Principal Investigator or to the Faculty Supervisor in the case of student research.

**********

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ADDITIONAL REVISIONS OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION::
(i) In the poster, the sentence "The information you provide will help me with the completion of Master's thesis." needs to be revised since it may be interpreted that if a person does not help you you do not complete your master's thesis. The sentence is to be removed or rewritten; for example "The information is for a Master's thesis."

(ii) The risks associated with this study appear to be no greater than what a person experiences in their daily life. The sentence "There are no known or anticipated risk to you as a participant in this study." should be included in the information letter.

**********
Revised materials should be provided within ten days to the Research Ethics Coordinator in the Office of Research in hard copy or by e-mail to ohrac@admmail.uwaterloo.ca .

Note 1: This clearance is valid for four years from the date shown on the certificate and a new application must be submitted for on-going projects continuing beyond four years.

Note 2: This project must be conducted according to the application description and revised materials for which ethics clearance have been granted. All subsequent modifications to the protocol must receive prior ethics clearance through our office and must not begin until notification has been received.

Note 3: Researchers must submit a Progress Report on Continuing Human Research Projects (ORE Form 105) annually for all ongoing research projects. In addition, researchers must submit a Form 105 at the conclusion of the project if it continues for less than a year.

Note 4: Any events related to the procedures used that adversely affect participants must be reported immediately to the ORE using ORE Form 106.

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Susanne Santi, M. Math.,
Manager, Research Ethics
Office of Research Ethics
NH 1027
519.888.4567 x7163
ssanti@uwaterloo.ca

## Appendix 2 : Recruitment Poster

Department of Geography
University of Waterloo

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PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH IN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF TRAVEL

I am looking for women who have participated
in a backpacking trip in Europe.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to take part in an e-mail interview. The questionnaire would be forwarded to you and can be completed at your leisure. After which a follow-up e-mail may sent to you to further discuss your responses. Completing the e-mail interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

The information provided will be used in my Master's thesis.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:
Jessica Deakin
Geography
E-mail: jdeakin@uwaterloo.ca

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo.

# Appendix 3 : Introduction Letter

Hello Everyone,

As most of you know I am busy working away at my Master's thesis right now. I am looking for Canadian females who have participated in a backpack-style trip in Europe. Backpack style should be interpreted in the broadest sense possible. General characteristics include moving fairly quickly from place to place without lingering anywhere for a particularly long period of time, a priority placed on keeping within a low budget ("less is more"), and an emphasis on activities and social interaction rather than luxurious accommodations or eating. Age and when the trip occurred is not an issue. Please contact me if you think that you (or a female friend of yours for the men on this list) have done such a voyage - and please double check with me if you are unsure, I am using a broad definition so it is likely that you're trip does qualify as long as it was in Europe and you're female.
I would also really appreciate it if you would send this message along to anyone you think might be interested in participating, and meets the qualifications about, asking them to contact me at jess_canada@yahoo.com . For each participant I will set-up a private interview time and location for the two of us to sit down and talk. If the participant is not in Waterloo, that's not a problem, I can do a phone or e-mail interview.
Below, is the an information letter which gives more details about the study. The information letter is usually given to participant before the interview begins, but I thought I would include it to give you more of a background to the study.

If you have any other questions or would like some more information, please contact me and I would be happy to help.

Thank you very much for your help with this. I am greatly appreciative of any help you can offer.

Jessica

# Appendix 4 : Information Letter

This study is being conducted by Jessica Deakin under the supervision of Jeanne Kay Guelke of the Faculty of Environmental Studies in the Geography department at the University of Waterloo. This study is being conducted to better understand the experience of female backpackers. This study is being conducted to better understand the experience of travel and how this impacts the development of self or the development of an identity. The personal importance of travel has been well documented, as too has been research into the development of identities, however, there has been little research blending these two realms of study. I hope that this research will address this gap.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. The information obtained from this research may provide clues as to how women define and discover themselves and how traveling is a unique facilitator for this. You may decline to answer particular questions if you wish and may withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions will be gathering information about you as well as your trip. Questions include "How old are you?", "Where did you travel? What was your route?", and " What sort of activities did you partake in while you were away? Did you try anything new or do something out of your character?".

Participation in this study is expected to take half and hour of your time and there are no anticipated risks to you as a participant. There will be an audio recording of the interview, which will also remain confidential. Your name will not appear in any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study, however anonymous quotes may be used. To withdraw from the study, at any time, tell by the researcher that you would like to leave.

Only myself and Jeanne Kay Guelke will have access to the material collected from this interview. Additionally, all the materials collected from this study will be held in Jeanne Kay Guelke's office for 1 year and then destroyed.

If you have any questions about participation in this study, please feel free to ask me. You can reach me at jdeakin@uwaterloo.ca. Alternatively, you can reach my supervisor, Dr. Jeanne Kay Guelke at jkg@fes.uwaterloo.ca.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics. In the event you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at 519-888-4567, Ext. 6005

## Appendix 5 : First Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

2. Where do you live? Where did you grow up?

3. Do you travel a lot, not just in Europe but elsewhere?

4. When you were traveling, were you involved in a romantic relationship at home? Did you continue you the relationship while you were traveling? How did that effect your trip?

5. Were you traveling alone or with friends? Did you travel with your partner?

6. What motivated your desire to travel?

7. What was your route? How did you choose the places you went to during your trip?

8. How long was your trip?

9. When did you take your trip?

10. What sort of activities did you partake in while you were away? Did you try anything new or do something out of your character?

11. I am specifically looking at women's participation in adventure sports, alcohol and drug use and participation in sexual activities. Did you engage in any of these sorts of activities while you were away? Could they be characterized as things you would not normally do while at home? If so, in what way/s?

12. Were these activities atypical of what you normally do at home?

13. Do you think of travel as a type of liberation or self exploration?

14. What sorts of things, if any, have changed in your life upon your return?

15. Why do you enjoy traveling?

16. Does traveling help you discover yourself or define yourself? In what ways?

# Appendix 6 : Second Questionnaire

**Questionnaire**

Please read the following statement and indicate below whether or not you consent to participate in this study.

> I agree to participate in a study being conducted by Jessica Deakin of the Department of Geography, University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Jeanne Kay Guelke. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the information letter. In addition I have had the opportunity to receive any further details I want about the study. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty by telling the researcher.
> I understand that all the personally identifying information I provide will be held in confidence and I will not be identified in the thesis, summary report, or publication.

Yes, I do consent.
No, I do not consent.
**(Remove the statement to which you do not agree.)**

Instructions:

Reflecting on the trip to Europe you originally wrote to me about, could you please answer the following questions. If you want to appeal to other traveling experiences please do so, but explicitly state when you if you do so.

1. When you were traveling in Europe, in what type of accommodations did you stay?

2. How did you find out about these accommodations?

3. How did you make the decision to stay there?

4. How would you describe the accommodations?

5. Did you interact with local residents while you were away?
   If yes, in what ways?
   If no, please explain why you did not.

6. Did your trip itinerary mostly include well-known tourism destinations, such as the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre, or did you seek out destinations with few other tourists?

7. Did you modify your route while you were away?

8. Think of your most cherished memory from your trip to Europe, why is it important to you?

9. Please tell the story of this cherished memory.