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**LEARNING OUTCOMES OF LEISURE TRAVEL:  
EXPLORATIONS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMS**

**Deborah Burton-Smith**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Educational Studies**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master in Arts  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES OF LEISURE TRAVEL: EXPLORATIONS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

**Deborah Burton-Smith**

**This thesis explores the learning outcomes, potential benefits and related learning needs of “baby boomer” women to gain an understanding of the impact of leisure travel from a woman’s perspective and to gain insights into strategic educational applications.**

**Qualitative research, based on the philosophy of phenomenology, was used. Eight women from the baby boomer generation with some travel experience were interviewed in depth over a three month period. Each woman’s travel experiences were unique, ranging from Caribbean sun vacations to European excursions to safaris through Africa.**

**Study participants were all affected by the tumultuous times in which they were born. They were eager to speak about their travels because it afforded them an opportunity to reflect and to reminisce about their lives as they remembered them, their reality.**

**Several common themes emerged, including the effects of early socialisation and their current family situation; their ideas of the ideal travel companion and their thoughts on group travel. Leisure travel as a priority and as an opportunity for**

liberation and escape were two other common themes.

The perceived learning outcomes of the participants included empowerment, a boost to self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as practical knowledge and a change in attitudes and behaviours.

The literature, combined with the candid interviews of the study participants, offered insights into how to enhance the outcome of the travel experience through a travel program. Pre-travel preparation, the actual journey and post travel reflection, as well as recognising the peculiarities of the adult learner are essential. Last, but certainly not least, the experience must be fun.

The study confirmed that although motives for travel varied there was one common outcome – they learned.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for their encouragement, co-operation and continued patience throughout my many years on this continuing educational journey.**

## **DEDICATION**

**This thesis is dedicated to my daughter Catherine.**

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY**

**This study of women's experiences garnered via leisure travel set out to explore, in general, the learning outcomes, potential benefits and any related learning needs of women belonging to the "baby boomer" generation. In particular, I sought their personal perceptions of how leisure travel had had a dynamic impact on their lives. I also hoped that insights gained throughout the different elements of this study might lead to strategic educational applications, such as the development of an educational program beneficial for leisure travellers, making their leisure travel a much more meaningful experience and enhancing the learning outcome of this experience.**

**My goal was to gain a true understanding of leisure travel's impact, particularly from a woman's perspective. Due to the scant research in leisure learning, I also looked to other education programs that had some similarities. Borrowing from a study on a parent education program that used a phenomenological approach to investigate the outcomes (First and Way, 1995), I too opted to apply this approach to investigate leisure travel experiences. Phenomenology is a philosophical research tradition, which began with the German philosopher Husserl at the turn of the century. "A phenomenological perspective includes a focus on the life world, an openness to the**

experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for invariant essential meanings in the descriptions.” (Kvale, 1996, p.38)

Using qualitative methods, a phenomenological study allows interviewees to describe the world through their experiences assuming, as Steinar Kvale states, “that the important reality is what people perceive it to be.” (Ibid, p.52) This methodology which is dynamic and fluid facilitates the unfolding of theories which expose human experiences in a way that is not possible using quantitative methods. It is a process of theory-building that uses open-ended interviews. Using conversation as an investigative strategy requires that the researcher perfect her listening skills in order to interpret and interpret again in order to uncover a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of a particular experience.

My plan was not rigid. Rather, it was at times, tentative, flexible and semi-structured. In this fashion I was able to best explore the unfolding histories and stories in what I describe as a somewhat collaborative effort between my interviewees and myself. This method afforded me a wonderful opportunity to learn and to adapt to the emerging focus as I wended my way down the road of discovery. Mary Catherine Bateson used a similar method in her book, *Peripheral Visions*. She states, “This is a book of stories and reflections strung together to suggest a style of learning from experience. Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to

another." (Bateson, 1994, p. 11). The open-ended interviews, discussions and observations were the methods I used to gain insight into the subject of learning through a lifetime of leisure travel.

The women in my study responded to all my queries with thoughtfulness, candour, and sometimes surprise at some of their own answers. In hindsight, there were many questions unasked that could have illuminated their personal voyages with even greater clarity, yet as Mary Catherine Bateson wrote, "It is common to gather data in fieldwork and continue to mine that data years later to illuminate questions still unposed when the original material was collected." (Bateson, 1994, p. 11). The data was collected; the eight were honest and direct; and they spoke of their lives as they wished to remember them. From these eight long, taped interview sessions came information and insight into the focus of this thesis: how travel affected the learning process and the personal journey through life of eight female adults.

These journeys back through decades of personal leisure travel brought critical information to the front line of discussion for examination through repeated review and rereading. They provided an in depth look at the life and times of eight women. A pattern of experiences was identified. These led to an emergence of explanatory themes that encompassed the participants' learning outcomes and sub-categories. The outcome of this travel down memory lane will enable me to better plan an educational program to enhance learning outcomes.

## **PILOT STUDY**

Prior to launching a full-scale thesis investigation, I thought it wise to conduct a pilot study. The aim was twofold: to see if I could use the interview technique; and to discern whether any worthwhile data would emerge.

I interviewed five subjects - two men and three women who ranged in age from forty to fifty-five. They came from very different backgrounds. Moreover, some spoke of their business travel experiences while others discussed leisure travel only.

The process served its purpose. I came away with insights into the interview method of qualitative research. Simply listening and working from the interviewees' meanderings was more effective than subjecting them to pre-written questions.

However, it was also apparent that I needed to keep them focused on the subject at hand. Transcribing the interviews, though laborious was evidently doable.

Furthermore, it demonstrated the need to narrow the differences of the subjects.

Although I maintained the age group known as "baby boomers", I elected to use only female subjects as interviewees and to focus strictly on leisure travel.

The pilot study enabled me to comprehend the wisdom of Youngkhill, Datillo and Howard when they wrote, "Qualitative methods allow researchers to understand respondents' level of emotion, the way in which they have organised their world, their

thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions." (Youngkhill, Datillo and Howard, 1994, p.197).

After going through the process, the words of Bogdan and Biklen rang true. "You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts." ( Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.32).

I came away more convinced than ever that "...humans do not simply have experience; they have a hand in its creation, and the quality of their creation depends upon the ways they employ their minds." (Eisner, 1993, p. 5). Experience is not passive, it does not simply happen to an individual, rather it is an occurrence that is made active by the individual's perception of it. In this way they make it their own reality.

## **CHOICE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The criteria for enlisting the interviewees was that they fit into the "baby boomer" generation, were female, and had had some travel experience. Eight women shared their stories with me. The women ranged in age from forty to fifty years old. Half the sample were married and three had children ranging in age from two to twenty-nine years old. They all had post secondary education, with half the sample

holding post graduate degrees. While most of the women hailed from Quebec, I also had representatives from both the east and west coasts of Canada. My familiarity with the interviewees ranged from someone I knew intimately, my sister, to close friends, acquaintances, and total strangers. Though I thought them to be a fairly homogeneous group, after my informal and open-ended interview sessions and the analysis of same, I learned that this was not the case.

The interviews were conducted over a three month period. They took place in a variety of informal settings such as my kitchen or theirs, either over a glass of wine or a cup of tea. Another took place in a car on a two hour driving excursion, and still another at my sister's home in Ottawa. Each interview ran for approximately ninety minutes.

Most were eager participants; however, two were somewhat reticent. That made my job more difficult. One potential candidate became so apprehensive and reluctant that we cancelled the interview. However, for the most part all of the discussions were open, frank and warm. The women spoke freely of their travels, their current life situation and their views on how travel impacted on their lives.

The information presented is not only the result of the interview, but also from my personal knowledge of several of the women. In addition, I followed up with telephone conversations when clarification of some of the ideas was required. Although all my participants stated that they had no reservations concerning the use of their real

names, and all signed informed consents, I chose to change their names in order to ensure confidentiality.

Each woman's travel experiences were unique. They ranged from Caribbean sun vacations to European excursions to safaris through the plains of Africa. All eight participants offered invaluable insights into the topic of travel and learning.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

All interviews were taped and later transcribed by myself, verbatim. This enabled me to listen, read, and reread the interviews many, many times. On different occasions I would jot down notes and random thoughts, always finding fresh insights and recurrent themes.

Once all eight interviews were completed and studied, I colour coded the pertinent passages that corresponded to universal themes. However, each time all eight interviews had been reread, new ideas came forward, forcing me to again go through the pages and retrieve further data. On several occasions, I had to contact my interviewees by telephone for clarification and additional input.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

I have gained insight and wisdom into my topic from various authors in different disciplines. Most notably, however, I have turned to the inspirational words of Mary Catherine Bateson. Her two books, *Composing A Life* (1990) and *Peripheral Visions* (1994) are reflective pieces not only on her life and travels, but also on the personal life journeys of other remarkable women.

In studying the learning outcome of leisure travel, the following literature was examined to provide a context for the thesis.

First, I turned to the literature that deals with the topic of experiential learning. In particular, the work of David Kolb's four stage learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) and Malcolm Knowles insights on adult learners (Knowles, 1970, 1980). The works of Mary Catherine Bateson (1990, 1994) contribute to this particular subject matter, as well as playing an integral part throughout the thesis.

Patricia Cranton believes that this experience based learning which results from having lived through an event can stimulate change or transformation (Cranton, 1994). Transformative learning is a concept in adult education popularised by Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) and Mezirow in Fostering Critical Reflection in

Adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning (1990). Daloz emphasises the importance of the facilitator or mentor in promoting transformation (Daloz, 1986).

Next, I consulted the literature on the topics of leisure, travel and learning with particular interest on the baby boomer generation (Bammel and Bammel, 1982; Verduin and Miller, 1986; Muller, 1994; Urry, 1990; Burkart, 1974). I also explore the notion of a Maslow inspired hierarchical travel ladder as presented by Philip Pearce to explain the different needs and motives of travellers (Pearce, 1988).

Finally, in order to examine what learning enhancement principles are incorporated in existing travel education programs, I reviewed an established and well accepted education travel phenomenon - Elderhostel.

## **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

No one could dispute that life is filled with learning experiences, from the moment of birth until we take our last breath. We learn in formal, non-formal and informal settings, alone or in groups. Each new learning experience plays a role in all our subsequent experiences. We are constantly building a repertoire of responses or attitudes to new situations depending on what we have previously encountered. We learn in school settings, in the workplace, in our personal relationships and in

encounters with other cultures in other lands. Indeed, the encyclopaedic definition of experiential learning states that it is, "sometimes referred to as real-life learning or experience-based learning, the learning that results from having lived through an event." (Dejnozka, 1991, p. 112).

The term experiential learning can conjure up different images depending on one's point of view. Those in the educational field focus upon how to credit mature students within an institution for their life experiences outside the classroom. Business people can look at it in terms of apprenticeships, where one gains experience on the job in order to function more efficiently with time. Indeed, as Cross (1981, p. 233) notes, "Most existing learning theories are more easily applied to what is learned than who is doing the learning.". My study takes both these notions into account. What is the learning effect of the travel experience in regard to personal growth and development? In particular, what do women learn about themselves and their world from their leisure travel?

Linda Lewis and Carol Williams give a fitting definition of experiential learning that can apply to the travel phenomenon. "Experiential education first immerses adult learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking." (Jackson and Caffarella, 1994, p. 5).

**Malcolm Knowles makes the distinction between the importance of experience in children and in adults:**

**To a child, an experience is something that happens to him; it is an external event that affects him, not an integral part of him. If you ask a child who he is, he is likely to identify himself in terms of who his parents are, who his brothers or sisters are, what street he lives on, and what school he attends. His self-identity is largely derived from external sources.**

**But to an adult, his experience *is him*. *He defines who he is*, establishes his self-identity, in terms of his accumulation of a unique set of experiences. So if you ask an adult who he is, he is likely to identify himself in terms of what his occupation is, where he has worked, where he has travelled, what his training and experience have equipped him to do, and what his achievements have been. An adult *is what he had done*. (Knowles, 1974, p. 44)**

**Experiential learning theory suggests that "Ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience." (Kolb, 1984, p. 26). We are changed by each new experience, constantly evolving. Each previous experience acts as a building block in helping us deal effectively with future situations. "In all learning, one is changed, becoming someone slightly - or profoundly - different." (Bateson, 1994, p.79). This, in essence, is the very definition of learning. There can be a change in outward behaviour or in the way one views or perceives their reality.**

**Kolb suggests a four stage learning cycle. It starts with a concrete personal experience; then there is reflection on that experience; next, individuals form generalisations; finally, these generalisations or abstract thoughts are tested in new**

situations (Kolb, 1984). Reflection is a crucial component of learning from experience. In fact, Kolb believes that "an experience that is not reflected upon is unrealized learning" (Jackson and Caffarella, 1994, p. 7). This conscious thought process enables individuals to build from previous experiences and transfer them to new situations. Learning can be envisioned as a complex spiral, continuously expanding and joining one experience to the next (Bateson, 1994; Kolb, 1984).

The self fluctuates through a lifetime and even through the day, altered from without by changing relationships and from within by spiritual and even biochemical changes, such as those of adolescence and menopause and old age. Yet the self is the basic thread with which we bind time into a single narrative. We improvise and struggle to respond in unpredictable and unfamiliar contexts, learning new skills and transmuting discomfort and bewilderment into valuable information about difference - even at the same time, becoming someone different. (Bateson, 1994, p. 66)

Learning is an interactive process. It involves not only the individual, but also the environment. Dewey explains that environment "is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had." (Kolb, 1984, p.35). When the environment changes, so too will the experience. Furthermore, each experience will be different for each individual because of the personal history that they bring with them.

Knowles believes that learning should involve the whole person, "including intellectual, emotional and physiological functions." (Knowles, 1980, p.67).

Experiential learning encompasses individual personalities, cultures, socialisation, and

learning styles. We must recognise that each individual plays a major role in structuring and interpreting his/her experience. One's personal history is a pivotal component to the learning outcome. No two people will learn in the same manner in the same experience.

Cross (1981) argues that individuals do not change radically over the lifespan. She contends that socially active youth become socially active older adults. Circumstances, such as changes in health, wealth, or family status may affect one's lifestyle and attitudes at different times in the adult life cycle. These changes or transitions through which adults pass can be opportunities for learning for some adults.

Alan Knox believes that participation and activity level can be predicted, "the people who were most active among their age group during adolescence and young adulthood tend to be the most active among their age group during middle and old age." (Knox, 1977, p.319). Also, there is a continuation of values in families even from one generation to the next (Knox, 1977).

To summarise, the literature on experiential learning reveals that an individual's character does not change drastically. Family antecedents, and early personality development can be predicted. On the other hand, experience can moderate some basic characteristics.

Some experiential learning occurs because of specific situations; whereas, other experiential learning comes from the different roles we assume throughout our lives. Upon reflection one can see the interconnectedness, or spiral tying of both these circumstances - the specific to the diverse. It is this reflection stage, the second of Kolb's four stage learning cycle that is central to experiential learning.

This became especially important in my analysis given the special nature of leisure travel. Although learning had occurred, this only became apparent in the minds of the study participants during the process of the interview. This reinforces another characteristic of learning - it is an interactive process. The interviewer assumes the role of midwife, helping deliver a deeper understanding of oneself to the interviewee by encouraging a review of particular experiences. This brings us to the concept of transformative learning.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING**

Marilyn Laiken offers a concise definition of transformative learning, "learners are encouraged to develop their reflective judgment, in order to surface assumptions and potentially to revise their established world views." (Laiken, 1996, p.63). As with experiential learning, reflection is a crucial element in the process. A mentor can be an integral part of the equation; someone to pose the critical questions; offer alternative,

more complex ways of thinking; and inspire a more enriching, and possibly life changing, learning experience (Daloz, 1986).

Cranton believes that experiential learning, "sometimes referred to as real-life learning or experience-based learning, the learning that results from having lived through an event" (Cranton, 1994, p.183) can be the catalyst that leads to transformative learning. "Transformative learning is defined as the development of revised assumptions, premises, ways of interpreting experience, or perspectives on the world by means of critical self-reflection." (Cranton, 1994, p. xii). Self-reflection, according to Mezirow, is the goal of adult education. "The purpose of learning is to enable us to understand the meaning of our experiences and to realize values in our lives." (Mezirow, 1990, p.17). With increased understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live comes the possibility for change, growth and "a new level of passion for life, accompanied by a greater sense of internal freedom and power" (Gould in Merriam and Clark, 1991, p.198).

Adults arrange their world into compartments that allow them to deal with events and issues in a prescribed manner. This arrangement is a result of their personal history, culture and past experiences. This is what Mezirow labels our "meaning perspectives" (Mezirow, 1991). We interpret all our future interactions and experiences based upon these preconceived frames of reference. We are comfortable staying within these meaning perspectives, even though they may include inaccurate information, prejudices and narrow mindedness. These distorted assumptions can lead



**"the learner to view reality in a way that arbitrarily limits what is included, impedes differentiation, lacks permeability or openness to other ways of seeing, or does not facilitate an integration of experience." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 118).**

**Sometimes individuals are presented with situations that force them to stop and question their beliefs. They then either overhaul or hold more steadfastly onto their preconceived notions. This is what Mezirow terms the "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow in Tight, 1983). Transformative learning can occur when one reflects and questions where and why these attitudes and beliefs are entrenched, and then proceeds to change and integrate this new way of thinking into his/her everyday life. Cranton summarises:**

**the process of working toward transformative learning includes some stimulating event or situation - self-analysis or self-examination, perhaps accompanied by emotional responses such as frustration, anxiety, or excitement; reflection and exploration, including a questioning of assumptions (meaning schemes). or meaning perspectives; and a phase of reintegration, reorientation, or equilibrium. (Cranton, 1994, p. 72).**

**It is difficult to question our attitudes and beliefs, and even more formidable to change them. This, however, is the goal of transformative learning. When individuals are faced with new situations, these can become occasions for substantial growth and learning. Travel experiences could be an instrumental educational tool in fostering these opportunities.**

Cranton notes that travel that provides the opportunity for actual encounters and observations can dispel previously held and maintained assumptions that were formed from the opinions of others, including the media. She gives the example of a person assuming southern Europeans are lazy. She claims that if that person actually has a first hand encounter with people from this region and discovers them to be ambitious and productive, they may have a change in attitude (Cranton, 1994).

To summarise the literature on transformative learning we can say with Daloz (1986, p.26) that, "The journey does not take away our old experiences - it gives them new meaning.". This journey can be the journey of life or an actual journey to a foreign land. All of the participants in the study made reference to a combination of experiences, life and travel. The reflection on their travel experiences afforded these individuals opportunities for new interpretations of their different experiences for a deeper understanding of who they are and the world in which they live. Leisure and travel can be important venues for self-discovery and learning. Next, we will take a brief historical look at travel and the significance of this activity as a leisure pursuit in the 21st century.

## **LEISURE, TRAVEL AND LEARNING**

Mankind has always travelled. In the earliest of times, travel was unorganised and individualistic and distances were short. The natural evolution of man modified

that. In Imperial Rome, two centuries of peace saw the elite travel throughout the empire for both personal and business reasons (Urry, 1990).

Pilgrimages for aristocrats and the gentry were widespread in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The fifteenth century even saw organised group tours, taking voyagers from Venice all the way to the Holy Land (Urry, 1990). The sixteenth century saw some growth in private and educational travel. Travel was a means of not only discovering one's own homeland, but also encountering the exotic cultures of distant countries (Burkart, 1974). "The Grand Tour" in the seventeenth century introduced travel specifically designed to expose the sons of nobility to museums, culture and art. These early tours were educational in nature. Indeed, the British considered them a must in a complete or well-rounded educational package (Ibid.).

The elite's stranglehold on travel rights exploded, however, with the advent of the industrial revolution. Moreover travel motives were no longer educational. Rest and recreation were the goals. Factory workers swarmed to England's seacoast to escape the drudgery of twelve hours a day, six days a week, 51 weeks a year in mundane jobs (Burkart, 1974). The advent of automobiles and airplanes opened travel to more people and further destinations. Plastic credit cards, or "instant money" did the rest.

**Today, travel is not the preserve of simply the wealthy or leisured classes. Indeed, people from all socio-economic groups now view leisure, recreation, and travel as not only possible, but also a personal right (VanDoren, 1983).**

**Verduin and McEwen see leisure as becoming increasingly important as a means of redressing the shortcomings of unfulfilling jobs. They claim that our choice of leisure pursuits can be a way of compensating for either excessively stressful, or unduly mundane work (Verduin and McEwen, 1984). Epperson envisions travel as fulfilling an internal need and as a necessary outlet for individuals who daily cope with the increasing pressure and stress of our modern society (Epperson, 1983). Bateson believes that "learning is perhaps the only pleasure that might replace increasing consumption as our chosen mode of enriching experience." (Bateson, 1994, p. 74).**

**These more seasoned travellers are no longer simply interested in getting away. They want more from their travel experiences. They want to learn and to intermingle with people of other cultures. They want to be able to use all their senses, in order to have a more complete experience (Pearce, 1988). Philip Pearce attempts to explain the different motives and needs of travellers using Maslow's hierarchy theory. He utilises the five levels of motivation – from physiological needs, security and safety, love and belongingness, self-esteem needs, to his pinnacle, the need for self-actualization – in his explanation. He believes that tourists build a travel career ladder throughout their lives and this would explain why they make different choices for their travel venue. He suggests that the more experienced travellers have very different expectations from that**

of the novice. "The use of a Maslow-based system to code tourists' career levels has a certain face validity which is appealing, since one might expect that while tourists initially enjoy physiological type experiences, more experienced travellers may use travel for the development of relationships, self-esteem purposes and even self-actualization motives." (Ibid., p.28). A joining together of leisure and education is becoming more inevitable. Both of these endeavours offer an opportunity for personal development and for adding meaning in one's life (Henderson, 1981).

Kalinowski and Weiler claim that ideas about success are changing. Individuals are no longer able to define themselves through career choices. They are looking for meaning in their lives within themselves (Weiler and Hall, 1992). Muller concurs. He believes that the 76 million baby boomers in United States and their eight million counterparts in Canada that are becoming middle-aged, are undergoing a psychological evolution (Muller, 1994). This huge group will seek out activities that broaden their horizons and enable self-fulfilment.

For a compelling example of leisure travel and learning, we turn to the literature on the Elderhostel movement.

## **ELDERHOSTEL**

The Elderhostel movement is an enormously successful example of combining the travel concept with learning. This organisation, which was founded in 1975 in New Hampshire by Martin P. Knowlton and David Bianco, focuses on the elderly population, originally the sixty and over age group; however, recently they have lowered their membership age to fifty-five. The original enrolment in their first year of operation was 220 persons. Several volunteers acted as the Board of Directors and there was "only one paid employee, and that one, the Director, on less than half pay" (Mills, 1993, p. 45). Now a mere quarter of a century later, their 80 full-time employees will direct 270,000 hostellers participating in over 10,000 Elderhostel programs around the globe. Elderhostel offers programs in all 50 states, most Canadian provinces and in 68 other countries world-wide.

The lifeline of the Elderhostel movement are their various catalogues, including separate Canadian, International and Service publications. Published quarterly, these catalogues remind readers of the group's philosophy while presenting information on their immensely diverse courses, both close to home and in hundreds of locations around the globe. It also informs the potential clients of registration procedures, types of accommodation and specific prices. Each publication is sent to 500,000 members along with 15,000 academic institutions and public libraries. Though this catalogue is printed on newsprint, without any glossy pictures or advertisements, it accounts for one-half of Elderhostel's total budget. (Mills, 1993, p.88)

**A relatively wealthy greying population and the increase in early retirements account for part of their success. The lure of learning, spending time with one's peer group and travelling to different destinations catapulted this organisation into the forefront of education for older adults. In other words, seniors want to learn for learning's sake. "Knowledge and aesthetic interests rather than practical or material gain become motivations for activity." (Mills, 1993, p. 150).**

**Founders, Martin Knowlton and David Bianco, saw older persons as adventurous, daring, resourceful, full of lifetime experiences and open to new ideas. This was quite a departure from how the younger generation viewed and the media portrayed the elderly in North America at that time. These two men believed that travel and education could be integrated into meaningful learning in a college setting. It could become an "educational adventure where minds and experience meet" (Elderhostel Canada Catalogue, 1999, p. 2).**

**They designed their week long campus visits to include three courses with no specific prior educational background needed, no exams, plentiful extracurricular activities and opportunities for socialisation, all at an affordable price. "An Elderhostel program can be a university/college level liberal arts or science course; a leisure learning course; a recreation course, like golf or skiing; or a combination of all three." (Elderhostel Canada Catalogue, 1999, p. 2). Scanning both the Canadian and International catalogues one can see that indeed there are courses for everyone. Seniors can learn about interpreting fairy tales, photography, cooking, jazz music and**

computers, just to name a very few of the subjects offered. The price for one week visits in Canada was approximately \$600. Two week international jaunts cost in the range of \$2500 U.S. Transportation to the particular sites is usually not included.

Elderhostel is a movement that espouses "the view that older people are capable of engagement rather than disengagement, that they maintain a great capacity to think, and to talk and to care..." (Mills, 1993, p. 172). Michael Brady describes the activity theory to explain the success of Elderhostel. "Activity theory asserts that the best way to achieve a successful old age is to maintain as many of the roles and activities that one performed in the middle years of life." (Brady, 1983, p.12). "It is a program of many interrelated elements that is consciously designed to stimulate in the elderly the idea that they are not pinned into the framework where society seems to thrust them, but can step out and become part of, even creators of, new frameworks." (Mills, 1993, p. 36). To this end in 1992, Elderhostel launched their Service Programs, "to offer vigorous older adults a satisfying route to public service" (Elderhostel Service Programs Catalogue, 1999).

Service programs give older adults the opportunity to live and learn in various unique settings. These volunteer hostellers "contribute their time, effort and skills to a worthy cause, such as building low-cost housing for needy communities in Guatemala; teaching English in China; assisting in historic restoration projects or ecological research on Midway Atoll; community service in India; and tracking humpback whales with marine biologists in Belize" (Elderhostel International Catalogue, 1999).



**Elderhostel believes that these excursions are an opportunity for seniors to learn both practical skills from the actual work at hand to more informal learning. "When people encounter different values and face personal challenges, they learn confidence, courage and self-reliance. Increased insight, skill and commitment often are the result."**

**(Elderhostel Service Programs Catalogue).**

**The focus of Elderhostel has always been travel. Paradoxically, it was the popularity of youth hostels that gave founder Knowlton the original inspiration for this endeavour. In his mid-fifties at the time, he undertook a four year walking tour of Europe. Travelling with nothing but a knapsack, he spent his nights in youth hostels. He saw that they were clean, inexpensive and safe. They also presented a traveller with a golden opportunity to meet fellow voyagers, engage in conversation and exchange ideas. These were rich learning experiences.**

**It was also on this journey that Marty Knowlton noticed senior citizens were active and engaged in society. He saw them teaching history, folklore, music and dance in Scandinavian Folk Schools. He witnessed the possibilities for learning from the elderly firsthand, and wondered why this could not be replicated at home in the United States. Thus, was the beginning of Elderhostel.**

**Elderhostel's success is well documented. Relying simply on word of mouth testimonials and return clients, its enrolment has sky rocketed. It is now a world leader in travel and education for the elderly. It continues to fulfil its mission statement:**

**Elderhostel is a non-profit organisation committed to being the preeminent provider of high-quality, affordable, educational opportunities for older adults. We believe learning is a lifelong process; sharing new ideas, challenges and experiences is rewarding in every season of life. ([www. elderhostel. org](http://www.elderhostel.org))**

**To summarise, the Elderhostel concept was initiated to cater to an older population than my sample of baby boomers. However, many of the same principles can be applied when designing educational travel opportunities for a population that is more actively planning for its retirement, and according to all my participants, will include leisure travel in various forms as a major component.**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

#### **BACKGROUND AND GENERATIONAL CONTEXT**

Eight women, coming of age, on the threshold of womanhood in a time of turbulence and change. It was the late 1960's and early 1970's. The focus had shifted from that of hard work and sacrifice espoused by previous generations to the notion that life was supposed to be fun. Some considered it an age of adolescence - a time when the motto was "if it feels good - do it".

Though all my participants are Canadian, they could not help but be affected by the daily television reports of unrest, disillusionment and activism taking place on campuses and in the streets of our neighbours to the south. The assassinations of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy were broadcast instantaneously to a shocked viewing audience. We were bombarded nightly in our living rooms with the brutality of the American civil rights confrontations in the Deep South, the horror of the Vietnam War, and the often violent student protests against the war.

Our own homefront was not immune to violence and confrontation. We were assaulted daily with visions of local unrest, such as the destruction of the Sir George

**Williams University computer centre, mail box bombings in Montreal, and a Quebec cabinet minister being strangled to death.**

**The television not only brought us the news, but there was also a shift in the portrayals of women in regular programming. No longer were women simply housewives deferring to their husband's wishes and maintaining a household. Career women started appearing as lead characters in many programs at this time.**

**Added to all this was the widespread availability of the birth control pill in the 1960's in North America which gave women another powerful tool. They could now take control of one very crucial aspect of their lives, reproduction.**

**Those in political office now not only had to contend with the growing discontent of the rising black population who wanted equality, but they also had to answer the charge of female inequality. In Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed equal rights to all. In order to make a conscious effort to increase the representation of women and visible minorities, affirmative action programs were instituted.**

**Women's liberation became a household word. Robin Morgan wrote this about the women's movement in 1970 as part of her introduction to "Sisterhood is Powerful", "It is frightening. It is very exhilarating. It is creating history, or rather, herstory.**

**And, anyway, you cannot escape it." (The Movement and The Sixties, Anderson, 1995, p.337).**

**My participants were no exception. They all were affected by the times into which they were born. Statistics Canada states, "women born during the baby boom years from the late 1940's to the mid- 1960's make up the largest group of women in Canada" (Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, A Statistical Report, Aug. 1995). Growing up in Canada enabled the eight participants to experience the trials, tribulations and turmoil of being a female in North America. These women weren't quite sure what their role was to be. There were the traditional roles of wife and mother, yet now new possibilities of widespread university education and fulfilling careers were also becoming reality.**

**Most of the participants were eager to speak about their travels. It afforded them an opportunity to reflect and reminisce about their lives. They presented the listener with an inside look at their years from childhood to the present. Recalling their personal travel experiences to an attentive, examining listener exposed insights about their current identity and the transitions of life through which they had progressed or passed. It was their life as they saw or remembered it – their reality.**

**Travel afforded my interviewees a taste of freedom from parental control. Though the ages at which they made their first solo journeys varied from twelve to**

twenty, their excitement was palpable as they recalled these inaugural voyages. To be set free from the conventions of home, to meet new people and explore unfamiliar places furnished each one of them with an overwhelming sense of independence, control and confidence.

The ability to adjust and adapt to new experiences is a learning skill that we employ throughout our lives.

Women have been trying to balance multiple claims and demands from before the beginning of history, for women's work has always embraced the array of tasks that can be done simultaneously with caring for a child. This has meant taking on whatever could be done with divided or fluctuating attention, could be set down to respond to interruptions and picked up again without disaster. Women must be one thing to one person and another to another, and must see themselves through multiple eyes and in terms of different roles. (Bateson, 1994, p. 97)

Never before had women been thrust into so many roles nor had they ever been given so many choices. Women born into North American life between the late 40's to mid 60's have found it necessary to handle great ambiguity as to what their roles truly were in a dramatically changing and increasingly more liberal society. But the eight also knew that, whatever the changes, they were the only ones who could ever be called mother. And, whether wife or roommate, it was, for the most part, they who had inherited the mantle of maintaining a house.

Travelling, encountering new cultures, living unique experiences, even if they are within one's own country, requires adaptability. "A willingness to change in

response to a new social environment can be a style of relating to the world throughout a lifetime." (Bateson, 1994, p. 93).

My explorations into the journeys of these eight women brought forth not only their travel itineraries, but also it was a voyage through two or three decades of their lives. Though travel and learning were the foci, our discussions also became a portrait of their personal history. Their lives were on display. Indeed, the eight related past pleasures and pain. Mary Catherine Bateson states, "Preoccupied with schooling most research on human learning is focused on learning that depends on teaching or is completed in a specified context rather than on the learning that takes spontaneously because it fits into life." (Bateson, 1994, p. 197).

Today, most travel research is done with an eye or direct focus on marketing. The tourism industry is forever seeking ways to add to their immediate economic gains. Simply adding to a body of knowledge is not on the industry's agenda. (Rovelstad, 1983, p.40).

My inquiries were neither concerned with school or teacher oriented learning nor was my interest in the economics of travel. Rather, the discussions were an attempt to uncover some insight from eight unique women into the interconnected worlds of travel and learning. Both leisure and travel are multidimensional and dynamic pursuits. Adding an educational component to these two elements can only serve to enhance their beneficial properties.

**The purpose of this study is to examine ways in which the travel experience can be enhanced in the 21st century for a particular population, the baby boomers. Members of the baby boomer generation, a large segment of our society, are more educated and informed, have more readily available disposable incomes and access to credit than previous generations. Moreover, they are searching for meaning in their lives. They are turning to leisure and education as a means for personal fulfilment. (Henderson, 1981; Epperson, 1983; Muller, 1994; Busch, 1993).**



## DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>
<b>Lianne</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>1 infant son</b>	<b>M.Sc. Nutrition</b>	<b>Part-time nutritionist</b>
<b>Julie</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>B.Sc. Nursing</b>	<b>Nurse</b>
<b>Beverly</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>M.Sc. Nutrition</b>	<b>Military officer</b>
<b>Margaret</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Married, Common Law</b>	<b>2 teenage stepsons, Not living at home</b>	<b>2 years university</b>	<b>Secretary, Mining company</b>
<b>Edith</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>MA Fine arts</b>	<b>Artist, CEGEP Professor</b>
<b>Vera</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>M.B.A.</b>	<b>University professor</b>
<b>Ellen</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>3 grown children, 2 living at home</b>	<b>B.Sc. Nutrition, BA Andragogy</b>	<b>High school teacher</b>
<b>Bridget</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>2 teenage daughters</b>	<b>BA, B.ED.</b>	<b>High school teacher</b>

## **INTERVIEW PROFILES**

### **LIANNE**

Lianne is the youngest of my participants at forty years of age. She is married, and the mother of an infant son. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia and she holds a post graduate degree in nutrition. Lianne is currently working part time for the B.C. Ministry of Health as a nutritionist.

### **THE INTERVIEW**

I had fussed and worried about Lianne. Fears that she would be reticent to speak freely and openly entered my mind as I drove from Montreal to Ottawa to conduct my first interview. I was nervous, but there was no need to be. In seconds the native British Colombian, whom I had met briefly twice before, erased all doubts.

Strangely, her reaction to the upcoming interview was the complete opposite of mine. She told me later that on the plane bringing her from the West Coast to Ottawa to attend a professional conference, she had become even more enthused and keen to participate in the study and share her feelings. I met a woman who was ready and eager to talk about travel and the impact it had had on her life. She was outgoing, friendly, and spoke without hesitation.

British Columbia had always been home to Lianne, even though she spent two years obtaining a Masters degree at the University of Guelph and a year in the Maritimes. Now 40, marriage to a man ready for retirement and birth of a son two years ago has dramatically altered her reality of travel.

Indeed, it appears these two factors have systematically arrested her travel style. Add to that, work as a nutritionist three days a week, and it was evident that I was interviewing a woman whose travel lust was being tempered by family obligations.

Travel came early and easily to Lianne. At 12 she went alone from Victoria to Vancouver. That meant taking a downtown bus and a ferry. At 16, her newly acquired driver's license in hand, she was continually camping in the United States or on Vancouver Island. At 21, she took her first plane ride, a trip from Victoria to the Okanagan.

Europe was her destination for three months upon university graduation. Much of her time was spent in the British Isles; however, she also spent a good deal of time on her own in Greece and Turkey. Some years later, she went on a three month European Kon-Tiki camping tour. She returned several times to England throughout this period.

Marriage and work changed Lianne's travel style and destinations. Though Lianne and her new husband did participate in a three month house exchange with a

Manchester, England couple, today, all of her travel is in conjunction with her husband's desire to see and catalogue 800 species of birds by the year 2000. That quest has taken her to Hawaii, most of the southern states and Canadian provinces. The dictates of work also allow her to occasionally travel across Canada.

## **JULIE**

Julie is a 44 year old single woman with no children. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree. She is a full time highly professional nurse in the transplant unit of a large Montreal hospital.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Julie and I know each other well, having worked together for 15 years. Nonetheless, she was a reluctant interview. Julie felt she had little to offer. She was afraid her travel experiences would not meet those of the other subjects.

Her initial body language suggested someone waiting for a dental appointment rather than a conversation in my kitchen, a place Julie knew well. At first, I had to pry out her thoughts and feelings. Later, as she became more comfortable with the subject, her words did flow more freely. I hadn't expected this interview to be difficult; therefore, it was a surprising challenge for me.

**Julie, who is fluently bilingual, was born and has always resided in Quebec. She returned to live in her parents' home ten years ago for the dual purposes of caring for her mother and father and in order to save money to purchase a house.**

**Julie's earliest travel experience was as a young teenager. She left Quebec for the first time on a Girl Guide camping trip to Alberta and British Columbia. This was her sole voyage experience until a decade later when she began working.**

**Her first adult trip was a week in Cuba. That experience led her to travel every year during her month long vacation. She found herself hitchhiking in Greece with a friend; cycling in Holland with an organised group; two Kon-Tiki camping tours (British Isles and Scandinavia); and visiting acquaintances in Belgium and Switzerland.**

**Though there have been some low cost trips to Florida to catch the sun; week long visits to Boston to stay with a friend; and to New Jersey and Minnesota to stay with her sister, monetary considerations have dramatically curtailed Julie's travel adventures these past years.**

**What has allowed her to see new sights is her professional expertise. She has represented her hospital, and presented papers on organ transplants, at various medical conferences in the United States and Belgium.**

## **BEVERLY**

Beverly is a 48 year old single woman with no children. She holds a Master of Science degree in nutrition. She has been a military Food Services Officer for the past 26 years and is currently stationed in Ottawa. She plans on taking an early retirement within the next two years. Her military career has afforded her the opportunity for extensive travel.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Interviewing Beverly was easy. She is my sister and I have known her all my life. She likes to talk about herself and I was already aware of her many travel experiences. Yet, some of her answers surprised me. Our directed conversation was an eye-opener. The session took place at my kitchen table.

Beverly was raised in the suburbs of Montreal. There was no travelling in her family, no funds and no car took care of that. It was her own career desires and determination to succeed that spurred her to travel.

It all began in her teens. University in Nova Scotia with summer internships in Toronto and Edmonton were the start. However, it was enough for the wander bug to bite and take hold. It would sway her career decisions forever.

With a Bachelor's degree in hand, she returned to Montreal to work at the Royal Victoria Hospital. In a year, boredom was setting in. She scraped together enough money to visit France and Spain. Back in Canada she returned to the Royal Vic, but her days of giving out nutritional advice to patients were numbered. Military life was calling. And what a career it has been!

Basic training and initial positions were in British Columbia. That of course, meant trips along the West Coast of the United States, as well as Hawaii. The most discouraging posting was an eighteen month tour in the "pitiful little town" of Shilo, Manitoba; however, what followed certainly made up for this brief time spent paying her dues.

A six month United Nations tour in Egypt and three years in Germany were her next postings. Those tours of duty allowed her to take vacation time travelling throughout the Middle East and Europe, though military dictates at the time ruled out any communist countries. There was so much travel and visiting that Beverly was saturated, she had had enough travel for a while.

Winnipeg was her next military posting. She spent four mostly "non-travelling" years there, save for a trip to Mexico and work related travel across Canada. A year of the same followed in Ottawa. Then came two years at the University of Guelph to obtain her Master's degree. Her only travel in that time was a short trip to Los

Angeles and San Francisco to visit friends. However, circumstances were about to change.

Two things occurred. First, her sister and brother-in-law purchased property in Florida. Secondly, the military began sending her to conventions and other business trips. Beverly was back in the travel groove.

Twice yearly Florida vacations have been the routine for the past nine years as well as numerous business trips throughout the United States: Boston, New York, San Diego, Houston, Washington D.C., Minneapolis, and Virginia. These personal vacation times and business adventures re-stimulated her wanderlust. She has re-visited England, travelled to Italy and is off to Australia next month.

What lies ahead is retirement. And that, to Beverly, means even more travel opportunities.

## **MARGARET**

Margaret is 41 years of age. She was born and raised in Nova Scotia. She attended university for two years, but never completed her degree in nutrition. She has been living with the same man for the past seven years. Margaret has two stepsons, age 13 and 14, who visit occasionally. She presently lives in the Northwest Territories



where she works for a mining company. Her work schedule is such that she has one month off for every two months of work.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

I had never met, or even spoken to Margaret before the interview. Our sisters, who work together and both live in Ottawa, arranged the encounter. We met at my sister's home when Margaret was in Ottawa visiting. We were both a little reserved and hesitant in the beginning; however, once she began recounting her exotic travel adventures, her energy and enthusiasm became apparent. Her travelogue was so interesting that at times I forgot the purpose of our meeting. This turned out to be the longest of my interviews.

Margaret is a small town girl from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. She didn't wander outside of rural Nova Scotia until some 14 years ago when she went to work for Comico Ltd., a mining company located 80 kms. north of Resolute Bay and 100 kms. from the magnetic North Pole.

Though her studies at Acadia University were in nutrition, she holds a secretarial position with her firm. This affords her a unique employment schedule of two months on and one month off. But a month's vacation after every 60 days of work means a surplus of leisure time. Margaret translated that into travel time. At 27, she

became a world traveller. She made the flying in and out of the Northwest Territories every two months into a wonderful adventure.

At first, it was tour oriented. She went alone, seeking and receiving the protection offered by tour organisers. Italy, Britain, Switzerland and Austria were the initial itineraries. She loved the experiences and wanted more. That, along with two stepsons aged 13 and 14, came about eight years ago when she met Neil, a native Scotsman and fellow employee of Comico.

Today, Neil and Margaret live together and their travel card is full and varied. They leave Canada four times a year. One trip was a three week world wind tour of South America which included Rio de Janeiro and Iguazu Falls in Brazil; Buenos Aires in Argentina; and hiking among the old ruins of Cuzco and Machu Picchu in Peru. Another time consisted of eight and a half weeks in Africa, including seven weeks on a safari, visiting game reserves in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Along with return trips to South America, Scotland and England are always on their travel agenda. So far, Neil, a soccer fanatic, has brought Margaret "home" to Scotland six times. A two month tour (she called it a "quick trek") of China last winter completes the travel diary to date.

Margaret was extremely animated when she spoke about China. The Great Wall, the Forbidden City, a scenic cruise on the Li River down to Qin Ling, and visits to Beijing, Changsha, and Hong Kong were highlighted. She was very fascinated to

learn something of the medical practices in China, including acupuncture, herbal medicines and shock treatments.

Next, they would be off to France for soccer's World Cup in June. A late bloomer, Margaret is now a world class traveller. Smiling, she remembered the good and the bad times. How could she ever forget a night in a pup tent with a lion roaring outside? Or the scaling of Mt. Kilimanjaro? Or the Qing Ping market in China tempting customers with roasted cat or dog? She even put a positive spin on being bowled over by a car in Africa and being treated in a public hospital. This was an opportunity to see first hand the medical practices in a different country and to more fully appreciate the luxury of advanced x-ray scanners and disposable needles readily available at home.

It is the exceptional beauty of the world and, of course, the people in far away places and in her rural Nova Scotia that linger in her mind. Travel for Margaret always comes back to the people you meet and the insight you gain from them. They are the true experiences of travel.

Though Margaret did not begin her travels at an early age, she has certainly made it a priority in her adult years. She states that she still has so many more places to see and so many more people to meet, it does not look like this late bloomer has any intention of resting on her travel laurels.

## **EDITH**

Edith is forty-five years old. She has never been married, nor does she have children. Edith has a Master of Fine Arts degree from Concordia University and spent three years in Paris perfecting her print making techniques. She runs a print making studio, where, along with doing her own art work, she offers courses to novices and facilities for other artists. To supplement her income, she teaches English as a second language at a Montreal CEGEP.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Edith and I went to elementary and high school together. I knew her so well that I thought this interview was going to be somewhat routine. After all, we had shared secrets and inner thoughts throughout our childhood, teenage years and as adults. I was mistaken. Her life of travel is much more complete, and risqué, than I had imagined, or had previously been told.

Her travel began early. At 13 she flew to Seattle, alone, to visit a friend. She too was bitten by the travel bug. In high school, it was off to Europe with another girl. They hitchhiked from country to country not knowing where they would stay, what they would eat and whom they would meet.

The following summer the two friends went to Spain. Since they had little money, their pattern was the same. Their baggage consisted of a backpack with a pair of jeans, a pair of shorts and some T-shirts and underwear. Hitchhiking was their method of travel. Their code was simple, "If either my friend or myself felt uncomfortable, we would just get out of the car. We wouldn't continue."

One year the pair went to Morocco. "We had ourselves a blast. Well, it was the '70's, we were stoned all the time." Edith added, Morocco is a "beautiful country full of men who are very, very macho and for them we were just like whores travelling". This made for some dangerous and exciting experiences.

Though she travelled to Florida a number of times during her university years, Florida is "not really travelling as far as I'm concerned". Europe is her most frequent travel destination. She lived for three years in Paris working with a world renowned print maker. At his studio she met and became friends with other creative people from many different countries and backgrounds. One of these fellow artists was a Japanese man with whom she fell in love. For a couple of years she led an idyllic life of doing the work that she loves and travelling on short jaunts to Madrid, London, and many other European capitals. Unfortunately, her lover became ill and she travelled with him back to Japan. They spent three months together in his home land as his health deteriorated and he died. These were the saddest but happiest months of her life. Edith's preoccupation for the last several years has been to return to Japan. This quest becomes a reality for her this spring.

Though Mexico and the Dominican Republic were affordable charter holiday spots for Edith, she harbours no fond memories. Quebec tourists ruined the experiences, "There is nothing worse than a bunch of French Canadian yahoos in Mexico". Edith prefers European destinations, travelling alone and making her own itinerary as she goes along.

Time has not changed Edith's travel style. Greece, France, Italy and England are still her main destinations; however, hitchhiking is out; but so are hotels. Money continues to be a major problem. Therefore, she still bunks in with, and is wined and dined by friends and people she meets. Edith learned to travel this way, and, that is how it will forever be. Edith thrives on the adventure and unknown that are inherent to her travel experience. She is truly a natural wanderer.

## **VERA**

Vera is a 44 year old woman. She has been married for ten years and has no children. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree and an MBA in marketing. She currently teaches at a Montreal area university. Her husband is also a professor at the same institution.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Vera is another interviewee whom I have known all my life. She was Edith's high school and college European travel companion. Aged 15 and 16, they began an odyssey of summertime hitchhiking over the back roads of France, Morocco, Italy and Spain. I had already taped and recorded Edith's stories, so I thought there would be nothing new for me to learn. I was mistaken, for these two women recalled the same adventures in very different terms.

Vera relates her teen-age travel tales as ones where safety precautions and chaste habits were the order of the day. "We would only go if there was a lady driver, not two, not a man, to ensure our safety." She added, "When it got to be 5 o'clock, we stayed in our rooms.". Just a week earlier Edith had presented me with a much different picture, recalling the wild and dangerous adventures they shared. How different a recollection from two travelling companions! Obviously their present realities have influenced their memories.

Over the years Vera's travel destinations expanded to include Greece, Turkey, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Her travel companions varied, other girlfriends, her brothers, and in her mid-20's, while completing her postgraduate studies, she travelled to South America and Mexico with boyfriends.

**Today, Vera has settled down. Her travel style has changed from the fifty cent a night youth hostels in her teenage years to the first class luxurious hotels she now frequents. Her husband and she have no financial problems. Indeed, much of her current travel is accompanying her husband who lectures and presents papers at academic conferences throughout Europe and the United States. Not only has her marriage changed her style of accommodation, but also her choice of sights. She allows her husband, with his vast expertise in the areas of art and history, to be her tour guide.**

**Travel is a priority in Vera's life. Although the ways and the means have changed over the years, it is still a highly valued leisure activity. Europe seems to be her destination of choice, opting for the familiar yet slightly different. Though it may or may not have always been the case, safety and comfort are now of the utmost importance. Vera has experienced a change of patterns in her lifetime of travel.**

## **ELLEN**

**Ellen is 49 years old, she has been married for almost thirty years to the same man. She has three children, two sons aged 28 and 24, both university graduates, and a 19 year old daughter who is currently in CEGEP. The youngest and eldest still live at home. Ellen holds a Bachelor of Science degree in nutrition and a Bachelor of Arts**



degree in andragogy. She has been a full time high school teacher for the past 28 years.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

This interview was different. Indeed, it was unique. It occurred while we were in transit, the tape recorder between us in the front seat of Ellen's van. I asked the questions while Ellen drove and responded.

Though Ellen is financially secure now, this was not always the case. She recalls her early child and adulthood as being impoverished. Married at an early age while both she and her husband were in university, their meagre part-time incomes simply allowed them enough for essentials. Ellen's first travel experience came unexpectedly in her last year of university. Pregnant with her first child, she travelled to Nova Scotia to complete her degree.

The years that followed were filled with saving for a home, adding to her family and repaying school loans. Once travel became possible, Ellen opted for low cost, all inclusive package holidays to sun destinations with her husband. They have travelled to the Bahamas, Cuba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. She has also occasionally accompanied her husband on business trips.

Ellen considers vacations opportunities for rest and relaxation, even more importantly, they are escapes. She fondly recalls travelling alone and staying with a girlfriend in a different city. "I consider it like going to a spa, because I wouldn't have the responsibilities of home." In other words, Ellen's thoughts on travel are a reflection of what many women hope for, but not all actualise - to flee, albeit for a short time, from the heavy responsibilities of home, work and family.

Ellen does not seek the unfamiliar. Exotic adventures and physical exertion do not appeal to her. However, she feels that her travel patterns may alter once she retires. She believes she has gained insights about herself over the years. She knows she would prefer travelling without her husband, perhaps with a girlfriend, but more likely on an organised tour. Safety is her priority. She is a reluctant traveller.

## **BRIDGET**

Bridget is 51 years old and she has been married for 19 years. She has two daughters aged 12 and 14. Bridget has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education degree. She is a full time high school teacher.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

**Bridget was my eighth and final interview. She too preferred talking over my kitchen table. She is self-assured, confident and forthright. Her life today is just as she foresaw and worked towards from an early age.**

**From childhood Bridget knew what she wanted in life. More importantly she went out and achieved her every goal - to become a teacher, to marry and to have two daughters. Now in her early fifties, she doesn't feel that she has learned anything from travel that she didn't already know about herself.**

**The daughter of an airline executive, Bridget travelled through much of Europe and the Caribbean with her mom, dad and sister from an early age. Her first solo adventure was at the age of twenty. She travelled to Europe for the summer with a girlfriend upon graduation from teacher's college. This would become her habit for the next several years. Always with a girlfriend and usually to Europe, Bridget was able to become familiar with local inhabitants and would shy away from the "tourist traps". Her best experience was a six month sojourn, where she spent half the time working and the other half travelling throughout Europe and Africa.**

**The advance planning of a trip has always been a welcome and thoroughly enjoyable task for Bridget. She believes this aspect doubles the enjoyment, "I guess I**

get twice as much fun out of a trip because you get the fun when you're there and you get the fun before you leave."

Bridget's travel practices altered dramatically in her mid-thirties when she married and had children. Though she still enjoys the planning phase, she now limits her travel itineraries to North America. Across Canada car tours and occasional trips to Florida are her current destinations.

Bridget believes that vacationing without the family is the best way to go. Travelling is an escape from the mundane activities most married women with children must tend to daily. Although Bridget has gone the solo route on occasion, she did admit to feeling guilty about it, something she never felt as an unmarried woman when she travelled.

The first time Bridget seemed unsure of herself was when I asked her about future travel plans. She has discovered over the years that she and her husband have different interests. She feels that organised tours that offer different agendas might be the way to go; however, she was ambivalent about this type of travel. Uncertain as to what was to come, she did offer one piece of advice, "the best time you will have is if you have a kindred spirit with you."

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS I**

#### **COMMON THEMES**

After becoming totally familiar with the interviews by listening to the taped words several times and rereading the transcribed versions many times, common themes and patterns emerged. In this and the following chapter I rely heavily on the voices of the participants to explore particular factors that may contribute to their reality of the many and varied travel experiences throughout their lives. We start with their first liberating youthful voyages; describe some of their current travel forays that are tempered by obligations to others; and finally discover how they foresee their personal future travel life.

#### **EARLY SOCIALISATION**

Anthropology professor and author Mary Catherine Bateson travelled and lived in different parts of the world with her famous parents Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson as a child. She continued the tradition by choosing a career and lifestyle that afforded her the same opportunity as an adult. She, in turn, relates several of her

journeys through a mother's eyes while bringing up her own daughter in different parts of the world.

Verduin and McEwen claim that, "adults have generally learned about 50 percent of their leisure activities as youngsters because of their families and friends (their individual subculture). and their influences. This earlier socialization process has had an impact on adults and their total leisure behavior." (Verduin and McEwen, 1984, p. 38). All the participants in my study speak about the significance, either directly or indirectly of their parents, or in one case, grandparents, who had an affect on their attitude towards travel.

Lianne speaks frequently about the importance of travel in her family. She recalls that travel has always been promoted and valued almost as a right of passage. *"It was very important that we be independent and travel in our family ... Travelling is a very important leisure activity in our family."* She believes that travel is such a big part of her leisure now because of her early socialisation into this activity.

Bridget's parents also played a major role in initiating Bridget to the world of travel. Her dad travelled extensively as an employee of Air Canada. From early childhood, Bridget travelled throughout Europe and the Caribbean islands with her parents and sister.

Vera too, as a child, took a yearly family vacation to some different destination in the United States or Canada. The two parents and four children would fill their car and head off on some adventure.

Edith, Julie, Beverly and Ellen all state that travelling in their early childhood was severely limited due to economic situations. Beverly, speaking about her parents, states, *"I'm sure a huge part of the fact that they didn't travel was money."* However, upon reflection, she recognised that perhaps she had been encouraged in her travel pursuits by both her grandmothers who reminisced to her as a little girl of their adventures as young women coming to Canada alone from England and Poland. Ellen, the least experienced and least adventurous traveller in my group, seems to have also had the least encouragement from family, *"I came from a meagre background .... there was no experience in my upbringing to go on vacation."*

Though Edith and Julie's parents could not afford the luxury of travel for themselves, they did not discourage their children from lone travel once the possibilities arose. Julie's first opportunity for travel came when she won a trip to western Canada with the girl guides as a young teenager. Edith travelled to Seattle, Washington alone at thirteen to visit a girlfriend. Though their parents were not instrumental in providing vacation opportunities, they were supportive of their children's decisions.

Margaret was two years old when her mother died. Their father raised her and her sister. She credits him with instilling in her the belief that there is nothing she can't

do because she is a woman. So, when she received a book about lion cubs in Africa for her fifth birthday and declared that she would travel to Africa, there was no doubt that she would do just that.

Vera, Bridget and Lianne would seem to simply continue the family traditions of travel started as young children. Once they came of age, they began their own personal odysseys, usually further afield than their earlier trips with parents. Though Beverly and Margaret began their travels at a later age they both had the compelling urge to see the world since they were very young children. They seem to have made choices throughout their lives in order to fulfil this need.

The value of the travel experience is passed to the next generation by example; therefore, one could assume that parents who view travel as a priority would instil this value in their children. Most of the participants stated that travel was a very important part of their leisure and it is an activity that they will continue into their senior years, thus suggesting that an early acclimatisation to travel is conducive to a favourable view throughout the lifespan.

## **TRAVEL COMPANIONS**

Friends play a significant role in the attitudes these women have towards travel. When asked to consider someone who doesn't travel, most had difficulty thinking of



anyone in her peer group who fit this description. When speaking about her friends Lianne stated that many of their conversations include travel, either where they are going or where they have returned from. Beverly was the most adamant when she stated, *" I can tell you, a woman who does not travel or has not travelled would never be a friend of mine because I would just not enjoy the company of a person who does not have the guts to go and travel. "*

Speaking about the consciousness raising groups of the late sixties and early seventies, Mary Catherine Bateson states, "for many women, the greatest discovery of these groups was that other women could be companions rather than rivals. They learned the value of shared experiences and the benefits of solidarity, becoming friends." (Bateson, 1990,p.113). It would seem that this statement also rings true for the early travel experiences of my participants. As young women most of them travelled with girlfriends and several of them stated that these were their most pleasant and fun filled travel experiences. Bridget recalls her best trip. *"It was fun, I was with my girlfriend, we had a good time, we got along really well together. I mean we were away six months together and we never had a fight. "* Edith concurs, *"I went hitchhiking with a very good friend and we had ourselves a ball".*

Ellen believes that women are better travel companions than men. She declares, *"women share better, compromise better, discuss better, communicate more easily. "* Though Beverly and Edith are both single, they have had travel opportunities with male companions, and would seem to agree with Ellen's assessment. Edith states, *"I have*

*tried travelling with my boyfriend, it was a pain in the butt, we both wanted to do different things.*". Beverly recalls two separate incidents with two different men where plans went awry. She faults their inability to plan and compromise for the resulting unpleasant travel experience.

The professed preferred travel companion for most of the participants seems to be either a like-minded girlfriend or a sibling. However, more than half the sample has travelled alone and both Lianne and Edith extol the virtues of this method. Lianne says, *"Often I am by myself in big cities, I don't mind it at all. Actually, I quite prefer it at times, because I get to do my own thing, I don't have to compromise."* Edith concurs. She stated that she knows what she wants to do when she travels and feels travelling with others involves too much give and take.

Clearly, the women in my study all felt that the choice of travel companion had an impact on the resulting travel experience. Women feel a need for consensus, even if this means sacrificing their personal travel plans. Therefore the first choice for a travel companion is someone who has similar interests and travel goals. If finding such a person is not possible, then travelling alone may be the answer for some women. Another option would be finding a group of like-minded people embarking on an excursion that will fulfil the individual's personal travel expectations.

## **GROUP TRAVEL**

Margaret explains that before she met her partner she travelled on group tours.

*"I travelled before Neil, my singular trips by myself would be more tour oriented and more protected."* She recommends this method for women who don't feel comfortable travelling alone, or whose husbands have no interest in travelling. She recalls meeting a woman on a group tour of Italy. This woman's husband refused to travel with her, so she finally made the decision to go on her own and joined a group tour with her husband's encouragement. Margaret states, *"She had a ball. I talked to her several times after the trip and she was always a happier person. She had a strong marriage, but I think taking the tour did a lot for her. In fact, she was planning on taking another one alone, if her husband wouldn't go with her."* Beverly adds, *"I would say to older women, who have never done it, who maybe for the first time have the opportunity, have some money, and don't have a young family who are keeping them at home, is to find some like-minded women, some sort of group and just go and do it."*

Safety is another issue that most of the women mentioned. Ellen speaks of this need several times throughout the interview. *"Safety to me is important."* This is one of the reasons she *"would be very interested in an organised tour"*. However, she adds, *"it would have to depend on what kind of tour and who the people were."*

Beverly has travelled alone, often for business, and she said she has never felt frightened. However, she states, *"if I were on my own for a longer period of time I*

*would look into connecting with a group". Vera admits that she has travelled alone and didn't really like it, "it is kind of scary". She is happy travelling with her husband now and does not feel the need for being in a group. She explains the reasons why group travel does not appeal to her, "you have to do what they want you to do, when they want you to do it, and they act all-knowing. I think people want to do more than just see the sights and they want to be with people of their own age."*

Though Julie likes physical activity and adventure on her excursions, she still seeks the safety that she feels is provided by being in a group. She says, *"I don't know if I would be ready to go and travel in a different country by myself, I'm glad I've always met up with a group."*

Edith and Bridget have never been on organised tours, but they see it as a possibility in the future for different reasons. Bridget envisions it as an opportunity for her and her husband to travel together, yet be able to each satisfy their different interests. She says, *"I would expect there would be different options, you know, when you get to a place you can do A or B. There would have to be some choice."* Edith feels that group travel offers a measure of security. Though she is not ready for this option yet, she states, *"I think maybe at a certain age, it's a good thing to go in a group, because the older you get the more chance you have of becoming ill or frightened in a new country."*

In conclusion, most participants did not advise young people to travel in a group, but they all saw group travel as a viable option for their generation or older. However, these group tours would have to be different than what they feel is currently on the market. They would like to be able to tailor these excursions in order to satisfy their personal tastes and needs.

## **PRIORITIES**

All the interviewees agreed that travel is an expensive leisure activity. However, for five of the eight it remains a high priority, despite escalating costs. Choices have to be made and Vera explains, *"I would rather take one trip than buy a diamond rock. Some people say that when I get some money I'm going to buy this piece of furniture or some new clothes, or whatever, I'd rather take another trip, because you have these experiences for life. You know clothes get small, you get tired of the ring, but you will always have your travel memories."*

Edith also admits to forsaking some luxuries in order to travel, *"it depends what your priorities are. I have an old rundown car, and I don't have fancy equipment in my house, it's a question of where you want to put your money."*

Lianne concurs, and adds that not only did the high priority her family places on leisure travel affect their expenditures, it also affected their choice of careers. She

states, *"We would forego a new car in favour of travel. Our house is almost paid off, and many people in our situation would maybe move up, spend another \$50,000. So, we looked at that, do we want to do that or take the \$50,000 and take six months off work and travel. Well, no contest, six months travel. So, it does influence how we spend our money, and it influences our choice of work. We like our jobs because it gives us an opportunity for a little business travel, but also because we can get time off."*

Beverly admits that a large part of her decision to join the military was because of the travel opportunities. Now that she is nearing retirement she is taking courses in travel in order to start a business. She states, *"I think travel, and my love for it, along with the realisation that it is very costly now a days, with the Canadian dollar as it is, caused me to do a total change in the direction of my life. I know that when I retire and the military no longer pays my expenses, I would die if I wasn't able to travel and so this pushed me into another avenue in my life."*

Margaret explains how the high priority she and her partner place on travel also affected their choice of employment and their budget. Their unique work situation allows them ample time off and high salaries with few expenses. However, she is not certain how much longer this employment will last, so she says another priority right now is, *"saving for the future to make sure we will always be able to maintain our travel lifestyle"*.

Margaret is fortunate in that she is able to travel and still save money for the future. Julie does not have this same luxury. She had to make a choice to forego her travel in order to fulfil another need. She explains, *"I wanted to save money, and I figured with all the money I had spent on trips, I would probably have had enough for a down payment on a house, so that is why I haven't travelled so much lately."*

Choosing travel as a leisure activity does exact a price. Most of the participants in the study agree that the benefits derived from travelling are well worth the cost. They echo Bateson's view that people may replace the pleasure of buying things with the pleasure that is derived from travel (learning) experiences. (Bateson, 1994).

## **CURRENT FAMILY INFLUENCES**

Marital status plays a significant role in the travel lives of my participants. Five of the eight women interviewed are married. Vera and Margaret, who have been in their relationships approximately eight years, and are both childless, agree that their spouses have exerted a positive influence on their travels for different reasons.

Vera has had the opportunity to accompany her husband on business trips around the world, this allows her a more luxurious style of travel. She also states, *"my husband has a vast background of history and art so when he takes me to all the famous*

*museums he knows exactly what's great to see, so we don't have to spend a lot of time looking for things. "*

Though Margaret travelled before she met her partner, she believes that her travel has become subsequently more adventurous. Travelling with a man seems to have given her the security to venture further afield. *"I travelled before Neil, my singular trips by myself would be more tour oriented and more protected. "*

All five of the married women state that it is definitely they who make the travel arrangements; however, the places or activities chosen are directly linked to their spouses' interests. Lianne wistfully states that she would love to go back to Europe, but, *"it hasn't been an interest of Warren's.....his priorities are to birdwatch".* Margaret seems to be able to accommodate both herself and her partner, Neil, by planning trips that will satisfy his soccer fanaticism, yet still allow for her needs. *"We are going back to France because of Neil and the world cup. He's a soccer fanatic, like I mentioned before, and in France we are going to Paris, Bordeaux, and St. Etienne, then to England and Scotland. "*

Bridget states that she and her husband have different interests, so travel together calls for a lot of compromise. *"Gerry is very into ruins, and I'm into shopping."* When asked if she would consider travelling to Europe on her own, she states, *"No, I guess I would feel guilty about that. I know my husband would love to*



*go, but unfortunately when we get there we are not going to want to see the same things. "*

Ellen has been married the longest at almost thirty years. She does discuss some short trips taken with a girlfriend or to visit someone, however, most of her travel over the years has been with her husband. Nevertheless, she further states, *"My husband and I have a different view on what is a vacation, so we have to compromise."* When asked about her future travel plans, Ellen believes she will travel further afield once she takes an early retirement; however, she states, *"I don't think I would do it with my husband, because it's not his thing, and as soon as I include him in the equation, I'm going to take away from my side of the equation, and I think I have learned in my old age to be a little more selfish in fulfilling my needs. "*

Mary Catherine Bateson concurs, reflecting upon her need to be "on guard against my willingness to sacrifice my time and space, as if my goals were automatically less important than those of other members of the family." (Bateson, 1990, p. 40).

The two women with young children at home seem resigned to the changing travel pattern they feel is necessary for fulfilling their current motherhood role. Lianne declares, *"now with a child we mostly don't go anywhere.....we're not planning on going anywhere too far for the next two years, it's just not practical."* Bridget states, *"everything has to be abbreviated because the attention span of a kid is very limited and*

*you can't go out for the day any more. You have to make sure that you're home, no, it's just not the same at all. "*

In conclusion, it becomes evident that women's leisure travel patterns change dramatically throughout the lifespan. One thing that is consistent is their ability to adapt and change, thus perhaps making women even better travellers than their male companions. "Women have suffered from lower self-esteem than men and have been less respected and less valued, but the very responsiveness demanded from women can sometimes lead to greater adaptability and greater willingness to follow the cues of a new environment." (Bateson, 1994, p.72).

## **LIBERATION AND ESCAPE**

Travel offers an opportunity for freedom and change. The women who began their travel experiences in their youth discuss how liberating it was. Lianne speaks about her first solo European vacation, she remembered thinking, *"no one knows where I am and I can do whatever I want. I felt completely liberated and at peace with the world. It was one of the few times in my life that I have felt really, truly relaxed."* Edith recalls the exhilaration of her first European adventure at age seventeen, *"I went hitchhiking with a very good friend, and we had ourselves a ball. We went for three weeks. We visited a lot of places in Europe, we just kept changing countries every day."*

*We thought this was just the greatest thing, we saw everything, but we saw nothing in the end, but we didn't care. It was just too exciting being on our own."*

Vera reminisces how she allayed her parents' fear when she set out for France with a girlfriend at the age of sixteen. *"I said to my parents, everything will be fine, we'll stay at youth hostels, we will take the train, so many kids are travelling, it will be safe. So they agreed and we flew off all on our own."* Bridget recalls her best travel experience was touring for several months with her girlfriend and with no obligations, *"We had no real itinerary, like we knew where we wanted to go but we didn't have to be there on a certain date and time. We had a really good time."*

The obligations of marriage and children leave some women yearning for a temporary respite, or escape. Mary Catherine Bateson believes that the idea of going home to relax is an oxymoron for most women. *"Home is the main workplace for many women; it is a refuge of relaxation for very few."* (Bateson, 1990, p. 121). All three participants who are married with children at home mentioned the cachet of getting away from home.

Ellen stated that even a short period is beneficial to her well-being. *"I have gone places to meet somebody, visit my girlfriend, fly there alone, and that I consider like going to a spa, because I wouldn't have the responsibilities of home. Because I'm living in someone else's home, so I don't have to dust, the spots on the wall are not my spots, so they don't bother me. So, that's just as good a vacation to me in some ways*

*as paying a lot of money. I can go to my girlfriend's house and have a glass of wine and find it very restful because I don't have any worries, it's different surroundings, and I don't have the pressures of my children, even if there are other children in the house, they are not my responsibility, so to me it's very important to me to have a change for my relaxation, just changing my environment to me is a rest."*

Lianne, the only woman in the study to have an infant at home, justified her recent solo travel excursions as business related, *"If there's a business trip that comes up, I'll go. In fact, people know that Lianne has dibs on the East, or anywhere."*

Bridget felt that travel offers married women an opportunity for rejuvenation, although she did admit it also could create feelings of guilt that she never felt as a single woman. *"It's a marvellous escapism, because a lot of the time what you have to put up with in your life is very mundane, day in day out the same thing, and that is why it is so good to look forward to because it is something totally different than what you do in your whole life."*

Not only did the married women with children extol the virtues of change experienced by travelling, the other participants agreed that the opportunity for different experiences offered by travelling was personally satisfying and refreshing. Margaret sees it as *"a break from a humdrum lifestyle, and it is rejuvenating"*. Edith says *"it is the fascination of leaving, going elsewhere, of seeing a different culture, speaking different languages, eating different foods, and meeting people who are very different."*

## COMING HOME

Mary Catherine Bateson opens her book *Peripheral Visions* with the quote, "Until you are at home somewhere, you cannot be at home anywhere." (Bateson, 1994). Leaving home afforded all the participants the opportunity to not only learn about themselves, but also to discover how important home is to them. Perhaps only by leaving can one truly know home.

Lianne states, *"there is no way I would like to live anywhere else but Canada. I have come back from each trip saying thank God I am Canadian."* Beverly, when speaking about living in Germany for three years, said, *"It made me really appreciate Canada, and I know that I feel really at home in Canada."* Julie adds, *"You are always happy to get home, but you bring something new back with you."*

It sometimes takes going away to see more clearly what you have. Bridget declares, *"I'm really happy to be a Canadian, we have a beautiful country."* Vera concurs, *"I love the places I go to, but I wouldn't trade home for any other place in the world. I'm proud to be a Canadian, I wouldn't want to be any other nationality. We're pretty lucky here, it's always nice to see green grass, a lot of space, and minimum pollution."*

Margaret agrees with the previous statements when she says, *"of all the countries in the world I am so glad that I was born in Canada."* However, she also states, *" the negative side of Canadian living is that we are all wrapped up in a very materialistic type of lifestyle where we rate people on materialism, not on how giving they are, or what they can give back to people, or how good as people they are, and when you go to other countries, what it brings into perspective is that you like people for who they are, it's not for what they have."* Leaving also affords one the opportunity to see the reality of home more clearly. This critical reflection can be the first step towards fostering change.

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Six of the eight participants emphasised food several times during the interview. Vera, Julie, Beverly, and Lianne recall pleasant memories of their travels by the food they have eaten. Lianne explains, *"I have to laugh when people ask me the most memorable moments of my trips recently. They mostly involve a lot of food. This wonderful pub, or this great meal, or this fabulous picnic that we had somewhere."* Vera recalls a rock concert she attended with her brother at the Acropolis, *"we had wine and souflaki and I remember it was just incredibly beautiful."* Beverly claims that she does not remember particular sights she has seen with great detail, *"...they all sort of meld together. But, I can tell you the meals and exactly what was eaten....oh, Lasserre in Paris!"* When Julie was asked to recall one of her best travel experiences,

she said it was, *"eating a meal in Sherwood Castle just as they did in the fifteenth century with only a knife, and drinking a warm wine and honey drink called mead"*.

Edith adds a sensual tone when she speaks about a visit to Tuscany where she derived so much pleasure from the evening meals, *"fantastic food, food that was fresh from the garden, wine made from the local vineyards, olive oil like you have never tasted"*. She admits this was not always the case. She recalls that her culinary palate was awakened by her very first trips away from home. She discovered it was necessary to eat different foods or go hungry. Paella was her first new taste sensation and she loved it. That was just the beginning of her many culinary adventures.

Margaret's food experiences have run the gamut, from eating in five star restaurants to meagre camping fare on safari. She has enjoyed it all. She says, *"It's nice just to eat at a campfire, we had pineapple upside down cake on a fire, and it was just incredible. We've had plain rice and lentils in a nice sauce and we've had incredible gourmet meals. I've eaten everything."*

Mary Catherine Bateson writes about learning different cooking methods, foods and recipes that she has incorporated into her personal lifestyle as a result of the different cultures in which she has lived. (Bateson, 1990). Both Vera and Lianne also stated that they have made changes in their food selections and preparation because of discoveries made on their voyages.

It is evident from the accounts of the participants that food is an important pleasure, not only during the actual foreign visit, but also in helping to retain the memory of the travel experience. Some travellers incorporate new recipes, culinary methods and novel ingredients into their own homes upon return.

## **PREPARATION**

I queried each participant on their method of preparing for their travels. There was a full range of methods from no preparation whatsoever to months of research from different sources.

Books were the most popular sources of information. Travel guides such as Michelin, Fodor and Lonely Planet were all mentioned several times. Also travel magazines, such as Conde Nast Traveler, were included in the individuals' reading materials. Maps were another source mentioned. Vera explains her method, *"First I get a map and look at where I'm going to go, then I get the Michelin guide or search through Conde Nast....actually the travel books, the Michelin guides are excellent because you can pick out the things you want to see and read about the history."* Beverly admitted that she does not do very much in the way of prior preparation except perhaps reading a travel book, her favourite being Lonely Planet. Lianne also mentions Lonely Planet, but she does more. She states, *"I have always done the research the*



*same way I approach school and my work, I read a lot, magazines, novels, Fodor, Michelin, Lonely Planet. "*

Another oft mentioned source of knowledge was people. Half the participants said that they rely on other travellers for insights, before departing and also while travelling. Though Lianne prepares by reading beforehand, she also believes that people are an even better resource. She likes discussing her future travel plans with others who have been there, or even better to speak with people who live in the locale she is visiting. *"We use a lot of local knowledge to find out where are the best places to go, places to eat and so on."* Though Margaret also believes that people are one of the best sources of knowledge, she admits that it is sometimes difficult to find others who have travelled to the exotic destinations she prefers. *"Working in the North Pole, there are not a lot of people who I come in contact with who have been there, even travel agents don't get to do a lot of exotic travelling themselves."* So, she admits that most of her prior information comes from reading or watching television documentaries.

Vera and Bridget have both recently turned to the Internet prior to their departures with quite different results. Bridget has enthusiastically embraced the convenience of this source. She elaborates, *"it is amazing the information you can get...the last trip we just did, I did everything through the internet, saw the sites, made the hotel reservations, everything."* Vera, on the other hand, was disappointed. She states, *"I went through the Internet and downloaded some pictures, but that was kind of*

*a let down, because it's not like being there at all. I think it probably took away a little bit, because when I looked at the pictures, and said that was what I'm going to see, and when I got there, it was magnificent, so it kind of gives you the wrong idea."*

Edith and Julie, when asked how they prepare for their trips, were quite adamant in their responses. Julie unequivocally states, *"I don't like to prepare, I like getting there and then I see what happens and go with the flow."* Edith echoes the same sentiments, *"I don't prepare, I just take off."* However, Edith admits that much of her travel is to stay with the many friends she has around the world. It is they who often provide not only accommodations, but also an itinerary and vast local knowledge.

Several participants mention taking day tours once they have arrived at their destinations. They believe this is a good method for providing a brief preview of the locale, leaving them to explore further at a later time, venues that were of particular interest to them.

Ellen, Lianne, Julie and Edith all state that often when they return from their travels they spend time researching a particular subject that has piqued their interest while they were away. Lianne explains that when one returns from a journey there is a renewed interest to learn more since there is now a personal meaning. She states, *"Once you have lived the experience for yourself it opens up more opportunities for further discoveries and interests."* Ellen speaks about how touring the Mayan ruins in Mexico awakened a passion to learn more about this ancient civilisation and how upon

her return she did just that. She states, *"my regret is that when I was there I knew nothing, I wish I had studied about it before I had gone on the trip."* Edith, however, does not look back with any regrets, she puts it quite succinctly when she states, *"If I had done the research before I went, it would not have done me any harm, but it's not the way I travel. I prefer to do the research afterwards because I have been there, lived it, experienced it, then I come back and I know what it is that I really want to look into."*

It is obvious from the accounts of these participants that there is not one method of preparation that is suitable for everyone. Adult education is very aware of this fact. These vast differences in attitudes, interests and learning styles of even a seemingly homogeneous group offer interesting challenges to program providers.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS II**

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES AND MEANING MAKING**

In this section I will explore some of the perceived learning outcomes of the participants as described in their own voices in order to give meaning to a lifetime of travel. Mezirow states that how we make meaning of our world is unique to each individual, "Our meaning perspective is a personal paradigm that positions us for action, defines our expectations, and selectively orders what we learn and the way we learn it." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 22).

#### **EMPOWERMENT**

Travel experiences offer women an exceptional opportunity to deal with unusual or unique situations. This opportunity allows a woman to employ a full range of interpersonal and life skills, thus proving to herself how competent, resourceful and valuable she really is. This recognition and acknowledgement of an inner strength and adaptability can be a tremendous source of pride and a boost to one's self-confidence and self-esteem.

Most of the participants spoke about increasing their self-confidence as a result of their travels. Lianne speaks about what she has learned from her voyages, *"more tolerance, more flexibility, confidence, being resourceful. You know you get off a plane, jet lagged, dropped into a different country and have to navigate your way through to the hotel, or have to find a hotel, or whatever, if you can do that, so what if something crazy happens at work or at home, it's nothing. I think it has transferable skills in terms of being able to take on anything."*

All three of my interviewees who are single, state that travelling has confirmed that one does not need a male partner to pursue travel interests. Edith, speaking about the benefits of travel, *"it makes you feel more independent, it makes you feel more confident about yourself as a person, because you cannot always rely on men. Men are wonderful, but if you just rely on them you are going to be in big trouble."* Beverly states, *"it makes me confident that I can sort of deal with different things in places where I don't understand the language and all that stuff.... no matter how tight a spot I'm in I can get out of it, I can cope, and, I can do it alone."* Julie concurs, *"I am more independent, more resourceful because I have travelled. If you want something you can get it."*

Margaret discovered an important revelation about herself after a successful attempt climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. Though she admits that she was slightly overweight and not the most fit person on the climb, not only did she succeed but also she was the first person to the top. *"I'm quite impressed that I did that, because it was*

*just sheer determination. I was proud."* When asked to disclose some of the benefits of travel, she stated, *"As a woman, I would say it has given me confidence."* Lianne concurs and adds that we must not forget the element of fun. *"It is confidence building and broadening, and just so enjoyable."*

Both Vera and Edith believe travel has changed a basic personality trait, shyness. Vera states, *"I'm kind of a reserved person, so when I go to other places it gives me a little guts to go and ask different people different things, I don't know them, so I think it has made me a stronger person, to not be so afraid."* Edith agrees, *"I am basically a shy person or I was, but I have become less shy. I realise when I travel, I am a different person, I have to find out what it is that I have to find out because I have to go."*

## **PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Travel affords individuals opportunities to gain insight into their particular areas of interest or occupations. Lianne, a nutritionist, states that she has learned a lot about food distribution around the world through her travels. All four of the women who teach insist that travel has helped them in their profession. It has exposed them to different cultures and ways of life, thus giving them a better understanding of their students. They have learned, Edith states, *"that there are nice people out there. They*

*have different ideas, different ways of thinking, different food, different opinions. It helps with my teaching."*

Bridget concludes that when you travel around and meet different nationalities, you see that, *"they have their poor, they have their rich, they're the same. So, in the classroom there are a lot of kids who aren't equal because of the poverty, it has nothing to do with which nationality you are."* Ellen likened her travel experiences to her teaching experience. *"Go with the flow, have an open mind, learn to dance fast, try and be calm, getting excited and hysterical doesn't do any good, it's all very much the same thing as in my classrooms."*

Each of the participants declared in their individual ways that travel has enriched their lives. Edith credits travel with not only helping with her teaching career, but asserts that it inspires her work as an artist. *"It gives me all kinds of ideas, it gives me new imagery to bounce off of. Travel opened my horizons."* Vera believes that travel has made her less frightened of the unknown. *"I think I am more open minded to different cultures, more willing to try new foods, new experiences, not afraid of any thing that is new or different."*

Julie agrees, *"travelling has helped keep my mind opened, you know, not to have a closed vision of the world. I think it might have helped me to accept things or people as they are."* In her occupation as a nurse, she deals with a wide range of nationalities and cultures. She credits her travel experiences as providing her with an

increased understanding into how other cultures live and work. *"Things can be done differently from place to place. We don't necessarily do things that are the best way of doing things, there are different ways of organising your surroundings and stuff like that."*

Margaret learned firsthand about medical practices in other countries first as a patient in an African hospital and later while visiting an acupuncturist in China. She credits her travel experiences with making her more easygoing and tolerant, *"the world out there isn't such a horrible place, you can always learn, every place you ever go, you can learn."* Ellen believes that learning is enhanced if more senses are involved, therefore, actually going to a place is the most beneficial way to learn. She says, *"T.V. and books are visual, but we've got five senses, and unless you are there, you don't experience with all your senses."*

Vera believes her many voyages have touched areas of her home life as well as her professional life. She says, *"it has changed the way I prepare meals, buy clothes, decorate my house, it even influences the television programs I watch and the books I read."*

Beverly also acknowledges that her travel experiences have played a tremendous role in both her career and personal life. *"I think, sort of the person I am now is a result of the many, many travels I have done...I know I can cope, and I am quite open to foreigners. I don't mistrust and I am not frightened."* Beverly chose the military life



for the opportunities it offered for travel. With retirement nearing, she has decided that her desire for travel has not diminished so she is planning a travel business for her next life phase. She claims that travel, *"is a soul enriching experience"*.

## **REFLECTIONS**

How accurate are the recollections of my participants? I posed this question to myself after hearing two very different versions of the same scenario that had occurred about three decades ago. Edith and Vera travelled extensively together in their teens. They both recounted the same frightening incident that occurred when asked about any unpleasant travel experiences they had had.

First, Edith very dramatically recalls their visit to Morocco. *"Once the woman I was travelling with decided to pick up somebody and she said she had a date for the two of us, because this somebody had a friend, so we could have done a foursome. I said I was not going to go nowhere with nobody I don't know in Morocco. I said you can go by yourself. She said, I'm not going to go by myself. Then I said, that was too bad, because I wasn't going to go. So, she was very stoned, I was a little bit too. We went back to the hotel, and the phone rang, and of course she had said we were going to be at a specific place, at a specific time. But, I wasn't going to go neither was she at this point. So, the phone rang, and I said my friend was very, very sick. But he kept phoning because he was not going to take no for an answer. There if you make a date,*

*you do not stand them up. Then, the doorbell rang, and I started to get scared. I said to my friend, who is this guy you picked up? Only to find out he was the owner of the hotel. This guy had a key. Then I thought, oh my God, if we don't get killed, I'm going to kill you. She was lying on the bed in another world. I packed the two backpacks. When she woke up, I said we are going to get out of here before we get raped, or killed or both. We took our backpacks then and took off like bullets. We didn't know where we were going to go. It was night, very dark, and we ran."*

Vera has a much more brief and edited summary of this incident. *"We were in Morocco, I tend to be a little friendly, so I was talking to these people, and they said, do you want to meet later and have supper? I said, sure, and they said where are you staying, and I said the hotel over there. And they found out we were there and they kept ringing our doorbell and we pretended we weren't there. So, my girlfriend thought they were going to break down the door and come and get us. That was pretty scary."*

These two different accounts demonstrate that not only are experiences perceived differently at the time but also the passing of years and changing circumstances may colour recollection. We experience things differently; we see things as we want to see them; and we remember things as we now wish to remember them. Neither Edith nor Vera lied, but, their historical recollections differ. Their "lived worlds" are not the same. Speaking about the participants in her book, *Composing a Life*, Mary Catherine Bateson states:

Storytelling is fundamental to the human search for meaning, whether we tell tales of the creation of the earth or of our own early choices. Each of these women is engaged in inventing a new kind of story. Not only is it impossible to know what the future holds for them, it is impossible to know what their memories of the past will be when they bring them out again in the future, in some new and changed context.

The process of improvisation that goes into composing a life is compounded in the process of remembering a life, like a patchwork quilt in a watercolor painting, composing a life through memory as well as through day-to-day choices, that seems to me most essential to creative living. The past empowers the present, and the groping footsteps leading to this present mark the pathways to the future. (Bateson, 1990, p.34).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PLANNING A TRAVEL PROGRAM**

Leisure “should be the chance to recharge our zest for living, for experiencing the beautiful and for intensifying our personal satisfactions. It should be approached with imagination and enthusiasm.” (Brightbill and Mobley, 1977, p. 76). Leisure travel can be all this and so much more. It can also be an important learning opportunity. Its very nature, being voluntary and self-motivated, is conducive to learning. Edmund Parker believes that well-planned and well-instituted travel programs can sensitise the participants to other cultures, thus fostering both cognitive and affective changes in behaviour (Parker, 1975). There are possibilities for enhancing the outcome of the travel experience. The literature, combined with the candid interviews with the study participants, offered insights into how to make this possible.

Three major characteristics of adult learners are their need for acceptance and validation of their experiences and previous knowledge; their different learning styles and individual complexity; and their desire to be a part of the learning process (Jackson and Caffarella, 1994). Malcolm Knowles lists four assumptions about the learning in adulthood that is different from the learning in childhood:

These assumptions are that, as a person matures, 1.) his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directing human being; 2.) he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource

for learning; 3.) his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles; and 4.) his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centredness to one of problem-centredness. (Knowles, 1970, p. 39).

Planning a travel program, recognising the particularities of the adult learner and using Kolb's four step model of experiential learning, could serve to make travel a more meaningful and fulfilling experience.

First the word must get out to the target population of female baby boomers. They would need to be informed about this program. This could initially be done through co-operative travel agents, newspaper articles and the internet. As with the Elderhostel movement, word of mouth testimonials and return clients would be essential for success.

The actual experience would begin with an introduction to the destination, using a video, guest speaker, and musical or folkloric dance presentation, or some combination of these elements. Also a sampling of some local foods and beverages, a very important element of the travel experience according to a majority of the participants, would be vital.

The safety and companionship of group travel was mentioned by the study participants. Some would be interested in such an option now, whereas others see it as a possibility in the not so distant future. Learning in groups is an important element in

adult education. Mark Tennant claims, "group learning is better, because it encourages the pooling of resources, builds a sense of group belonging, allows participants to express their views, helps them clarify their thinking" (Tennant, 1997, p. 108).

Inviting participation from the group members to relate their experiences or knowledge would foster inclusion and individual input. Subsequent pre-travel meetings could be lead by assigned members, all the while a facilitator could elicit topics and ideas for discussion, guiding the group with encouragement and challenges, thus leading the group to reflect upon their previous experiences, their beliefs and their expectations. This would in turn lead to a more complete understanding of one's attitudes and perceptions on a variety of issues involved when travelling. After several pre-travel sessions offering overviews on the history, geography, culture, and other topics chosen by the group, they would voyage to their chosen destination together. This preparation beforehand is the first step towards fostering a more complete and fulfilling travel experience. It is also an opportunity for group members to become better acquainted with one another and with the group leader.

Actually experiencing the country firsthand, taking in all the sights, sounds and smells, can only make the prior preparation solidify the learning. Individuals can be assigned particular places or sites to investigate and then share their information at the time of the visit. Members should be encouraged to write daily about their thoughts and experiences at this phase. Phyllis Walden believes journal writing is an important tool for self discovery, especially for women learners (Walden in Taylor and Marienau,

1995). She states that, "The journal can be used in three time dimensions: to capture the present, to reflect on one's life history, and to create the future." (Ibid., p. 19).

Upon return home, the group meets again to reminisce and relive the travel experience. This not only offers an opportunity to interact with their fellow travellers once again, but it is also an opportunity for sharing journals and discussing and reflecting upon what transpired, thereby reinforcing the learning that took place. It can be a time to plan for the next destination. Partaking in a new travel experience would start the four stage cycle again. Each voyage is part of an upward spiral, inspiring more complex learning.

In setting forth this travel program, there is one very important element that I had completely overlooked. Upon rereading the transcribed interviews for the umpteenth time, there was one word that was uttered by all the participants. That word was "fun". I had forgotten, "Play elevates one's human creativity. Realising the value of leisure, recreation, and play as they relate to education endeavours involves recognising that a playful attitude or an acceptance of the importance of leisure is worthy and productive." (Henderson, 1981, p. 8)

Learning need not be onerous, in fact, Russell Belk believes that the relaxed atmosphere of leisure travel is an exceptional opportunity for learning.

A similar uninhibited, levelling, statusless quality attends the travel of modern tourists who are more apt to behave like children than like the well-disciplined adults that they

are at home. This need not mean that the tourist doesn't learn from the travel experience, but that it is not the primary purpose. Paradoxically, the playful open attitude of tourists may actually make them more apt to learn than a more work-like orientation might. It is similarly essential that the creative scholar engages a playful liminal spirit rather than a deadly serious quest for knowledge. (Belk in Brown & Turley, 1997, pp.28,29)

Though fun was not something that was lacking in the travel stories of the participants, what was missing in some encounters was pre-preparation. Also missing in all instances, was conscious reflection. The interview process of this study allowed some of the women an opportunity to verbalise thoughts about their pasts and futures that they had not given voice to before. Some actually stated that they had never thought so clearly of how their travel experiences had impacted on their lives. Glesne and Peshkin believe this is one of the not uncommon by-products of this type of qualitative research, they state, " Questions raise consciousness....Respondents learn about themselves" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 91).

A trained facilitator is a crucial component for enhancing the travel experience. She must be cognisant of group dynamics and how to foster inclusion, co-operation, and enjoyment for all group members. This person should be a catalyst in helping the traveller become more reflective about their wanderings and what they have learned through their travel experiences. She would be instrumental in opening a dialogue that encourages the participants to share and to view their experiences from different perspectives. Daloz sees mentors or facilitators as guides, "They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and



point out unexpected delights along the way." (Daloz, 1986, p. 177). Subsequently, as the voyager becomes more aware of the need for reflection in the learning process, they assume this responsibility themselves, making the facilitator's job obsolete.

Any travel program must take into consideration the rich resources of the people who are travelling. Exploring the travel histories of the participants yields much more than a travelogue. It reveals a life history. This indeed forms a font of information to be explored and shared. Not all participants have the same learning styles, as my interviewees demonstrated. Some people prefer reading travel books and magazines, talking to other travellers, or simply jumping right in. Therefore, different options must be made available. Finally, the participants themselves would assist in determining the course content and direction.

When planning an educational travel program, there is much to be learned from an examination of the Elderhostel organisation. The benefits to the elderly of this organisation, which has now been around for almost 25 years, has been written and talked about often. Long and Zoller-Hodges conducted a phenomenological study in 1995 and concluded that the interviewees all perceived changes in their lives due to enrolment in Elderhostel programs. "Changes included new attitudes about themselves, others, other cultures, and history." (Long and Zoller-Hodges, 1995, p. 125). Though the participants are older adults, these findings transgress age. Travel learning is beneficial to all age groups.

**The lives of baby boomers entering the transition to middle age is fraught with change. Verduin and McEwen believe that adults at this stage of life are engaging in more leisure pursuits, "With apparently more time available because of less immediate family responsibilities and the loss of child-centered and child-determined schedules, adults at this age level will begin to increase social activities." (Verduin and McEwen, 1984, p. 40). Leisure travel can offer the members of the baby boomer generation opportunities to reflect upon and question some of their basic assumptions about themselves and their world, thus enhancing their quality of life in the 21st century.**

**Elderhostel's concept of educational travel can certainly be applied to younger adults. Also, life stages are not as clearly delineated as they once were. Adults are entering formal educational institutions at any age, and returning to new and different studies at various times throughout their lives. Many adults are retiring earlier, or undertaking totally different occupations in later years. As well, our technological society requires continuous updating of skills.**

**Also, home life has changed tremendously. Women in the workforce, parenthood deferred to later in life, high divorce rates, remarriages, all make it more difficult to label adults into neatly designated age groupings. Elderhostel does operate with the premise, born out by participant surveys, that individuals enjoy spending time with their peer group. This is certainly an important factor to be considered when designing a travel program.**

There are two essential areas in my proposed travel program that differ from Elderhostel, pre-travel preparation and post-travel learning. Both these elements were addressed by two survey respondents in a study of the perceived benefits of participating in Elderhostel programs which was conducted in 1982. First, a 74 year old woman laments that she would have learned so much more if she had been more prepared in advance (Brady, 1983). Other respondents spoke of the importance of the other group members and how regrettable it was not seeing them again once they returned from their trip (Ibid.).

Karla Henderson believes that recreational endeavours and meaningful education go hand in hand. She explains their relationship using Freire's idea of praxis:

the view that learning and education take place only through the constant interplay of reflection and action. Likewise, the common recreation experience includes more than just the action that occurs. This experience also includes the anticipation of recreation and the recollection (reflection) of the experience. The combination of action and reflection creates a transformation of the leisure time or recreation activity. (Henderson, 1981, p.8).

Another issue to consider is that "a growing number of travel companies are marketing women-only adventures and are going after female baby-boomers with disposable income who want to escape hectic urban lives" (Cornacchia, 1999, p.D1). Baby boomer women are successfully facing greater demands and challenges than ever before. However, they are still burdened with two kinds of vulnerability according to Mary Catherine Bateson, "first is the quality of self-sacrifice, a learned willingness to set their own interests aside and be used and even used up by the community. The

second kind of vulnerability trained into women is a readiness to believe messages of disdain and derogation." (Bateson, 1990, p. 54). Perhaps women-only travel programs can offer women an opportunity to find a new sense of self. As the married women with children interviewees attest, only once they leave the family behind can they care for themselves completely.

Many baby boomers are more physically fit, educated, and socially concerned. This could explain the proliferation of adventure and ecotourism packages. The upcoming generation of tourists is opting for more exotic, more physically demanding, and more personally enriching travel opportunities. Learning is a strong motive for exploring new lands, and has been so for centuries. Mary Helms' book that explores travel motives from another time and from other civilisations is relevant to the modern voyager. "Knowledge (personal learning or experience) is one of a number of reasons, all containing a high degree of individualism - including adventure, curiosity, self-realization, fame and prestige, and freedom from social constraints - that are frequently cited in the ethnographic literature as providing motivation for travel beyond the home territory." (Helms, 1988, p. 67).

The travel histories of most of my eight participants would seem to bear out the notion that one's interests, such as an affinity to travel and to learn remain consistent throughout the lifespan. Almost unanimously these women declared that travel was a priority in their lives, and had been from their first youthful voyages, up to the present and beyond into their future senior years. This bodes well for success in their elderly

years, if we subscribe to the activity theory, which states, "the best way to achieve a successful old age is to maintain as many of the roles and activities that one performed in the middle years of life." (Brady, 1983, p.12). The challenge is to offer travel programs that will continue to satisfy and fulfil their needs both now and in the future.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

**This thesis started out questioning the potential benefits of leisure travel for women. Was a vacation, holiday or travel venture merely restful time away from the humdrum daily routine of home or was there more? Could there be more? Did travel hold learning possibilities for adults? Did travel affect the daily lives and attitudes of the participants? Do travellers want more than rest and relaxation when they leave home?**

**The short answer is yes. Modern travellers want more from the time and money invested in this popular leisure pursuit, and travel can be the opportunity for self-fulfilment (Verduin and McEwen, Epperson, Pearce, Henderson, Muller). "Travel is fun; travel is exciting, often dangerous; travel provides tactical or esoteric knowledge, valuable experience, and a variety of material goods. Travel also can give a measure of individual freedom and of personal renown." (Helms, 1988, p. 78).**

**My participants concurred. Their motives for travel were varied. Voyages undertaken at different times in their lives had diverse underlying reasons. At times they sought escape, adventure, excitement, freedom or some combination of all these elements. None admitted to learning as being their goal.**

However, learn they did. Travel has offered them unique and varied experiences. The interview process offered them a chance to articulate and reflect upon what travel has meant to them. My participants unanimously agreed that visiting other areas of the world had lead to increased factual knowledge in the areas of history, geography, art, culture and language.

Travel has also changed their attitudes both towards others and themselves. All agreed that their experiences boosted their self-confidence and offered them an opportunity to discover their hidden strengths. It has allowed them to see others, be it spouses, children or friends in new ways. They also credit their varied encounters with increasing their understanding of different ways of life. They now believe that they have a less rigid mindset.

All noticed behavioural changes. These range from lowering workloads to allow more time for travel, to completely rearranging their budgets, giving travel a high priority for discretionary income.

The travel career ladder proposed by Phillip Pearce might explain why my seemingly homogeneous group of women, all Caucasian Canadian baby boomers, educated, and middle-class had such a variety of holiday experiences, from Ellen's penchant for the all-inclusive sun holidays to Margaret's African safari treks, with everything in-between. Factors such as individual personality differences, safety

concerns, monetary considerations, and companions can all be influential. "We live not only in the presence of different cultural visions but with different individual modes of perception, with access to the memories of childhood and of alternative states of consciousness. These resonate with the many layers of vision within any single cultural tradition." (Bateson, 1994, p. 12).

One might hypothesise that having successful travel ventures leads to a desire for more opportunities even further afield. Also, either the early initiation or overall frequency of travel experiences could affect one's placement on the travel career ladder. Therefore, I would suggest that this could be one of the reasons that the baby-boomer population is seeking more from a vacation than sun, sand and sex. Their higher placement on the travel career ladder affords them an opportunity to make their leisure travel something more. It offers them a possibility to satisfy their self-esteem needs, and the favourable conditions for self-actualisation.

There are those, including one of the participants, who feel that "the experience of discovering the world is being ruined by those who demand that away be like home". (Gordon, 1999, p. 13). As well, people around the world are now exposed through television and the internet to foods, fashion and a way of life that their parents could not have imagined. These factors are creating our "global village" where a traveller may find herself in very familiar surroundings half a world away. However, it is my contention that even as cultures merge, the travel experience can be unique, exciting and transformative. Even planned excursions can offer opportunities for chance



encounters with interesting locals. These encounters are often much more memorable than the tourist sites. Several of my interviewees mentioned such meetings in fond detail. Margaret speaks of her emergency visit to an African hospital, where she learned about the medical care firsthand. Ellen recalls how she was struck by the similarities of all mothers because of her casual conversations when travelling. Edith learned about policing in different countries after losing her passport. Recently my twelve year old daughter was jokingly swept off to wash dishes in a London restaurant. Though she had toured through all the famous attractions, it was this spontaneous encounter that was most memorable.

Visiting other parts of the world changes the traveller in various ways. It is one more way a woman can develop skills that enable her to handle out of the ordinary or stressful situations. It can be an empowering and transforming experience. "To put it another way, you can't bungee-jump at Victoria Falls without seeing the Falls and you can't see the Falls without being moved by them. Much of travel is in our heads. For minds that are not narrow, travel can still be broadening." (Gordon, 1999, p.13).

Recent magazine and newspaper articles recount the proliferation of adventure and ecotourism businesses, some which cater solely to female clientele. This is in response to a demand from women themselves who want the opportunities to experience, first-hand, the rigours of going it alone. "For some women going it alone is the only way for them to build their self-confidence." (Cornacchia, 1999, p.D1). Baby boomer women must adapt to various changing roles throughout their lives. However

much our society is changing, women still perform most of the household duties, along with caring for children, caring for ageing family members, and working in stressful, demanding jobs outside the home. Getting away from all these demands is an opportunity for cherishing oneself, and that, according to Mary Catherine Bateson, is responsible behaviour. "Self-care is important for its own sake as well. It is intimately tied to self-esteem, with the implication that the one who is cherished is important and valuable for his or her own sake." (Bateson, 1990, p. 145).

Pivotal to the success of the proposed educational travel program is the facilitator, or group leader. Katherine Kalinowski and Betty Weiler agree that this person must be much more than a tour guide. The facilitator should be familiar with adult learning theory and group dynamics, along with being knowledgeable in the fields of leisure and travel (Kalinowski and Weiler in Weiler and Hall, 1992). In order to prepare these educational travel specialists, institutes of higher learning must recognise the need and value of such professionals. However, for this to happen there may have to be recognition that leisure is an essential and serious endeavour. Edwards and Usher believe that there is "an underlying assumption that leisure activities are not sufficiently serious, that they lack the cultural capital and thus are not properly 'educational'." (Edwards and Usher, 1997, p. 68).

Russell Belk notes that "pursuing knowledge of others is necessarily bound up with learning about ourselves" (Belk in Brown and Turley, 1997, p.26). I can identify with his observations. The voyage of this thesis has been one of discovery, not only of

my personal self, my roles as a student and as a researcher, but of my relationships with others be they family, friends or strangers.

Interviewing the eight women in this study enabled me to relive my travels as a teenager, single adult, young wife, and now, as a mother. Although I did not formally ask myself the questions that would have offered me the opportunity to see my travel life history in print, each session was an opportunity for personal reminiscence, learning and sharing along with my study participants. Since I too am a female member of the baby boomer generation that has had some travel experience throughout my life, there was a natural affinity. Completing this introspective voyage, I am now more aware of the significance of my travel experiences in making me the person I am today. I can now say with even more conviction than ever that I believe travel is definitely both a learning and an empowering experience.

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