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# Women's Independent Travel Experiences in New Zealand

Thesis submitted by

**Linda Mary Myers**

University of Sunderland

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements

of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October, 2010

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my cousin and*

*best friend at school:*

*Michael Pearson*

*(1958 - 1969)*

*who died when we were only 10 years old*

*and was not given the opportunity*

*that I have had to live*

*and travel the world.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The undertaking of a PhD is predominantly an independent and self disciplined task, however many people have contributed along the journey to the success of this thesis and I wish to acknowledge their input. Firstly, I would like to thank all sixty travellers and providers in New Zealand who participated in this study, without their cooperation and input this study would not exist. This thesis is about them, their travel experiences and their lives and has only materialised through their honesty, enthusiasm and co-operation.

I have been very fortunate to have been given excellent supervision and support from my professor Kevin Hannam, whom I would like to sincerely thank for his continued support and understanding. He was instrumental in convincing me that I had the potential to successfully complete a PhD after I had completed a Masters with him as my supervisor. In addition he supported my enthusiasm for attending international conferences in Bangkok, Thailand, (2005), ATLAS SIG Meeting 'Backpackers Research Group; Dunedin, New Zealand, (2006) NZTHRC New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, followed by ATLAS Asia-Pacific Conference; ATLAS SIG Conference Shimla, India, (2008) and the recent 11th World Leisure Conference in Chun Cheong, Korea, (2010), for which I received ESRC funding. He supported me in attending national tourism conferences in Brighton, Eastbourne, Leeds Metropolitan, Durham, Newcastle, and Aviemore, Scotland. Attending the international conferences has led to the publication of three book chapters, with another and a journal chapter in the first edition of the Journal of World Leisure. Professor Hannam also invited me to attend Barcelona, as staff member on a Tourism field week, 2006 with the MSc Cultural/Heritage Tourism from Sunderland University, which was a valuable and enjoyable experience for me. His knowledge, enthusiasm for qualitative research, knowledge of backpacker research and his ability to give advice at crucial stages has helped me enjoy and enhanced my personal benefit from the PhD journey.

I would also wish to thank a number of Sunderland University staff, firstly, Nicole Mitsche, my second supervisor, mentor, good listener and all round life saver during various stages of development. During the early stages of my PhD, Dr. Dann Knox, a former member of the Tourism department at the University of Sunderland, who gave me valuable advice and support for which I would like to convey my appreciation. Other members of the University I would like to thank are Marge Surtees and Tony Davey working for the Disability team who has provided me with excellent service, support and equipment relating to my back problems. Thanks also to Sarah Fairless and her team administering the Future's fund, a hardship fund which gave me the opportunity to attend the conference in India. The administration staff from Priestman Building, Sue Cottam and Hazel Andrews for their assistance over the years with photocopying and other administration duties. To Miss Jones and Caroline Pull Printing Services (North East) Limited for transcribing assistance and to the library staff, especially Laurie Ford; the graduate research school and in particular, Mark Procter, Elizabeth Knox and Dianne Davis. Other students who have supported me during various aspects of the study were Paula Danby, who joined me in New Zealand for a couple of weeks during the interviews, mainly to observe and learn interview techniques and James Johnson, for listening. A special thank you to Paula Danby, a fellow PhD student from Sunderland who visited New Zealand during my research and helped me considerably with driving and daily chores whilst I was recovering from a slipped disc. Whilst I was bed bound for a few days in a hostel she helped locate volunteers in the common room area and brought them to our dormitory so I could interview them from my lying position.

I conducted my research in New Zealand on two occasions for several weeks during my pilot study and actual study I was welcomed and assisted by many individuals whom I would like to thank for their input. Accommodation and activity providers, in particular Rosemary, the owner/provider of women only

lodges who gave my great encouragement, advice and welcomed me into her home. She needs particular praise for looking after me for a few weeks at her home, transporting me to physiotherapy appointments after I slipped a disc and was immobile for a few weeks. Other accommodation owners who were generous with their time and accommodation costs were; Ceridwyn and Danielle, at Watershed cottage; Marlise and Aggie at the Kiriwai Retreat and Camp; Kate and Lyn Driftwood Dreamers Adventure Tours; Terri and Liz Sullivan at South Sea Mermaids Adventure Tours limited; Carla, Alice and George of Treks Flash packers in Rotorua; and Melissa of Potiki Tours. A further group of friends, provided me with some accommodation and transport during my research, they included Viv and Paula Caravan tour; the McArthur family at the Steventon Homestead; Jill's in Wellington; Dianne and Wayne, in Auckland who made me welcome for several weeks allowing me to visit Auckland University and its library as well as hostels; and finally, Glen and Bev, in Christchurch were I was based for a couple of weeks interviewing in the city square and various backpacker hostels.

Academic support in New Zealand came from several establishments located around the country, and were contacted through networking at conferences. The New Zealand visit was heightened by being invited into Auckland University by Dr. Claudia Bell, who also gave me valuable advice and encouragement; she also invited me to deliver a guest lecture. A special thanks to Ken Newlands, School of the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) who provided me with office space in the University and access to University resources. Other academics provided assistance and support during my visit: Monique Brocx Faculty of Business, Auckland University of Technology; Jude Wilson at Lincoln University, Christchurch; Mark Canning, Rotorua college of Technology; Dr. Tara Duncan, Otago University.

I would also like to acknowledge my family and friends. My family for working hard to financially support me particularly during my earlier degrees, allowing me to progress to this academic stage. My wise friend of 91 years, Marjorie Hall who had greatly encouraged and inspired me, who recently died. Anne and Liz for feeding me on occasions when I was too busy to cook. Last but definitely not least my partner, Jane Oag for listening, sacrificing and encouraging me during such a long period of time, for her patience and understanding for which I will always be extremely grateful.

## ABSTRACT

An ever-increasing number of women worldwide are making the most of their independence and becoming increasingly motivated to travel more than ever before. Women are grasping the opportunity to be tourists in their own right; for their own pleasure and satisfaction, breaking away from their hybrid identities of, 'the wife', 'mother', 'girlfriend' or the 'housewife'. Women of all ages are beginning to become empowered and to travel together in close female friendship groups, in two's or alone. They are gaining confidence and are able to independently self-organise their trips. Educational opportunity and financial self sufficiency through improvement in earning capacities has greatly increased women's access to a much wider range of leisure and travel choices. Personal life spans involve significant chronological transitions, such as from university to work, marriage to divorce, work to retirement where identity has to be renegotiated; new autobiographies reconstructed, and new trajectories have to be set. Often, it seems women are motivated to travel during such transitional circumstances. Despite the tendency to assume that male appeals are universal, research suggests that female and male perceptions and experiences of space differ substantially. In tourism, gender relationships have been examined from a number of perspectives; women as the employee's of the tourism industry; women as hosts in the tourism destination; and more recently women as tourists. Women are slowly being recognised as a market segment, facilities and different services in luxury hotels, women only tours and cruises are evolving to meet demand.

The gendered perceptions and ideologies of New Zealand; being 100% pure nature and the adventure capital of the world which is open to all, ages, and abilities, attracts statistically more women backpacker travellers than men. A major objective of this thesis is to redress the bias in tourism research; to represent women including lesbian women in the tourism arena. In both cases giving women a 'voice' to represent their touristic experiences, desires and link these to the notion of identity construction through tourism. Little remains known on the wider variables and influences that motivate the travel choices of lesbian consumers in particular. It has been argued that female tourism

experiences, like their leisure behaviours, are constrained by male dominated cultural values and attitudes at destinations and by social constraints and restrictions in their home society. However, on the other hand it has also been argued that some women's tourism experiences - such as backpacking and independent travelling- can also be potentially liberating for some women as they gain the freedom to express their often hybrid identities in new ways. The focus in this study is towards the positive gains and benefits to the individual through travel experiences, but this cannot be done in isolation without considering some of the constraints and challenges. It is multidisciplinary in approach, grounded in theoretical frameworks offered by gender studies, tourism studies, social science, leisure studies, women's studies, queer theory, cultural geography and sports studies. It is a qualitative study which sets out to explore tourism experiences and the personal growth and identity development through tourism experiences in New Zealand. Sixty in-depth interviews were held with international women travellers, backpackers and tourism providers in New Zealand. Adopting an interpretive paradigm with a limited feminist influenced, the important focus was to allow the women to speak of their experiences and lives in their own voices. In line with qualitative methodologies, it is the words and photographs of the women that form the data set for this study. It critically examines how a performative understanding of the playing out of gender can be linked to notions of serious leisure, the reflective production of biographies and accumulation of cultural capital.

The results reveal that personal development, self identity and social identity can be influenced by travel experiences in varying degrees. Four interlinking categories of importance were identified; embodied experiences, psychological development, socio-spatial interactions and visual consumption. Each category evolved and was sometimes dependent upon age and sexuality. The results of this study show that there are real benefits to personal growth and identity development to women through their travel experiences. Through travel women make the time or find the time to self-reflect on their lives. They escape from the social constraints at home and can achieve a sense of freedom. Through the act of travelling itself and through participating in physical adventure activities travel can present a

means of empowerment and a record of achievement. The confidence gained through travel experiences can enhance self-esteem and help construct a new dimension to their identities.

#### STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Linda Myers, declare that this work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Linda Myers

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research study examines the experiences of independent women travellers during their visit to New Zealand during the summer of 2006-2007, over a three month period. The first sections of this chapter provide background information about the global context for the independent traveller, the position of gendered travel research and New Zealand as a popular independent traveller's destination. It draws upon a range of inter-disciplinary work, from tourism studies, leisure studies, women's studies, gender studies, sports studies, cultural geography, feminist studies and queer theory.

### 1.1 INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS IN THE GLOBAL TOURISM CONTEXT

Independent travel is an important and growing sector of worldwide tourism (Hyde and Lawson, 2003) and a continuing trend in international tourism is the growth in independent travel and the relative decline in package travel (Chesshyre, 2002; Pryor, 2001). Hyde and Lawson (2003: 13) conducted a study in New Zealand entitled 'The Nature of Independent Travel' and noted three characteristics that identified the distinguishing nature of independent travel; the traveller experiences an evolving itinerary, the traveller is willing to take risks in selecting vacation elements and the traveller possesses a desire to experience the unplanned'. The great majority perceive their trip as a 'break' or 'time bubble' (Elsrud, 2001: 605) creating a liminal space in which to explore and develop their sense of identity.

Backpackers are, according to Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) one major section of this independent market, and are well researched, particularly the younger element but not specifically from a female

perspective. In research literature and in general, backpackers are often characterised as self-organised pleasure tourists on a prolonged multi-destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extending beyond that which it is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern. Such a description serves as a guideline only and cannot be used to objectively distinguish backpackers from other tourists, for only a few match all the parameters throughout the trip, there exists a continuum of backpacker types that differ with age. Hecht and Martin (2006) agree that backpacking is less about chronological age and more about travel style choices. Cohen (2010: 31) suggests that 'the term backpacker may be obsolete for the new segment of older travellers and those who are travelling in the style of a backpacker are increasingly dismissing the phrase'. Similarly, (Richards and Wilson, 2004) came to the same conclusion. There are no consistent definitions of independent travellers and backpackers and as time progresses their meaning and definitions are fluid and consistently changing.

Exactly who or what constitutes a backpacker is open to much debate, and there are numerous words used to describe them. For example, travellers; backpackers, independent travellers, and FIT's (free independent travellers), SIT's (Semi-free independent travellers), fully independent travellers, youth travellers, interactive traveller and more recently, flash-packers have all been used. For the purposes of this study the women travellers are referred to as '**independent women travellers**'; under this umbrella term there were women who referred to themselves as backpackers (32%), some just travellers or free independent travellers (50%), tourists (8%), working holidays (5%), VFO (Visiting Family and Friends Overseas) (3%) and (2%) other.

In the latest ATLAS publication, one of a series of three, specifically addressing backpacker tourism, Hannam and Diekmann (2010:1) introduce their volume with the statement 'from drifters to backpackers, from travellers to flashpacker'. In essence, the traditional backpacker has evolved

through time and 'the term flashpacker has emerged as a new and key constituent of contemporary travel' (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010: 1) and has been defined as 'the older twenty to thirty-something backpacker, who travels with an expensive backpack or trolley-type case, stays in a variety of accommodation types.....who engages in mainstream backpacker culture' (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010: 2). These travellers are referred to as older travellers who may be taking a career break but who have a greater disposable income than the traditional young backpacker are can therefore on occasions treat themselves to some luxury when and if required (Jarvis and Peel, 2010).

Richards (2007: 2) large survey entitled: *The New Horizons 11- The Young Independent Traveller*, concludes that 'travel is an increasingly important aspiration for young people around the world. It shows that young people continue to identify themselves as "travellers" rather than tourist, and that they are exploring further, spending more, and demanding new types of experience to fulfil their desire to, learn about and discover the world around them'. 'Backpacking is often related to life crises and transition especially but not exclusively, the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood in Western societies, characterised by the 20-30 age group from which the majority of backpackers originate' (Cohen, 2010: 52). By entering a liminal space, they escape their parental influence, gain freedom, make independent decisions, resolve problems encountered and develop their personal identity.

The academic interest in backpacker tourism has grown in recent years. Three publications, by ATLAS (Association for Tourism and Leisure Education) draw together conference papers from around the world about the issues, concepts and development of backpacker tourism. Since the millennium three texts have focussed exclusively on the phenomenon; **Beyond Backpacker Tourism** (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010); **Backpacker Tourism** (Hannam and Ateljevic, 2008); and **Global Nomad** (Richards

and Wilson, 2004). Two chapters in the book **Backpacker Tourism**, focused on women as backpackers. Firstly, using a feminist analysis to analyse destination choice and social identities of women from the UK (Myers and Hannam, 2008) and secondly, Israeli Women Backpackers experiences (Moaz, 2008). Moreover, a few other studies have focused upon women travellers, and are usually authored by women (Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, b; Small, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005; Wilson, 2000, 2004; Wilson and Little, 2005, 2008) with one exception Hottola (2002), a male researcher who studied women travellers in India. Other than this literature as (Richards and Wilson, 2004: 264) recognise 'there is little academic literature on women backpackers as a serious phenomenon'.

## 1.2 NEW ZEALAND - THE 100% PURE TOURISM DESTINATION

This section briefly describes New Zealand the destination and tourism provision, in an attempt to introduce the context for this research study in terms of New Zealand on the world tourism stage; New Zealand as a popular independent traveller and backpacker destination; and New Zealand as the 'adventure capital of the world'. It is clear that New Zealand backpacker market is not homogenous, as respondents vary considerably in terms of their motivation, activities and travel styles.

Morgan and Pritchard (2002: 11) suggest that 'New Zealand competes with about 90 other destinations for just 30% of the global tourism market', the primary markets being, UK, USA, Germany, Japan, China and Taiwan. Bell (2008: 345) considers the popularity of backpacking in New Zealand, she states that over ten million internet sites refer to backpacking and of those one million referred to backpacking in New Zealand. She goes on to say state that 'New Zealand promotes itself to the world largely as a remote place with an incredible, unique and varied landscape' and since TNZ (Tourism New Zealand) adopted the brand '100% PURE New Zealand' in 1999 further advertising 'a clean, green, pristine, pollution free environment'. The principle motivations for visiting New Zealand identified, included

exploring other cultures and interacting with local people' and 'was regarded as a trip of a lifetime' (Newlands, 2004: 234 - 235). 'In countries such as Australia and New Zealand the backpacker travel industry is becoming a force to be reckoned with' (Richards and Wilson 2004: 266).

According to the official site of Tourism New Zealand (2009:1) 'New Zealand society is diverse, sophisticated, and multicultural, and the honesty, friendliness, and openness of Kiwis will impress you. And the great advantage of New Zealand is that all of its diverse physical, cultural, and artistic landscapes are so close to each other!'. New Zealand competes with many worldwide destinations; the New Zealand government leads innovative campaigns, such as branding New Zealand '100% PURE' and through efficient tourism, marketing and provision it provides a high level of satisfaction to its customers, so much so that New Zealand was voted the best holiday destination in the world by readers of the **British Daily Telegraph** (2005); the Telegraph travel awards are the result of the biggest annual independent survey of the British travelling public. About 30,000 readers were questioned on their travel habits, with New Zealand coming out on top. Tourism Minister Damien O'Connor (Tourism New Zealand, 2007:1) said 'the award was a great accolade for New Zealand and its hard-working tourism industry'. Also, readers of the international travel magazine *Wanderlust* (2007: 45) voted New Zealand first in its Top 10 world country destinations, 'it's a close run thing, but now its official: New Zealand is your favourite country on earth'. The forward thinking Tourism New Zealand secured a world's first deal with **Google Earth**. 'Tourism New Zealand's 100% PURE campaign has gone interstellar - or perhaps that's internet stellar - with a world first partnership with Google Earth. The state-funded international tourism marketing body has provided data for a "layer" of information on visitor centres, points of interest and scenic highlights on Google Earth's photographic satellite map of the planet. Links through to Tourism New Zealand's official consumer website can then provide greater information, including activities and accommodation' (Hembry, 2007: 1).

New Zealand is a very popular independent traveller and backpacker destination and is often visited as part of a world tour; backpackers often visit South East Asia and Australia before visiting in New Zealand in the Southern hemisphere. A similarly recognised route is the grand tour of Europe in the Northern hemisphere. New Zealand Tourism Statistics are published quarterly; the International Visitor Survey (IVS) is carried out by the Ministry of Tourism. Their research is based on interviews conducted with international visitors as they depart from Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch airports. Around 5,200 interviews are completed each year, according to specified quotas for certain nationalities and visitor demographics. The interview questions cover all aspects of visitors' time in New Zealand from arrival to departure, including their demographics, accommodation types used, regions visited and an estimate of expenditure. 'In 2008 the statistic showed that most international visitors like to make many of their own arrangements as they travel through New Zealand. Fully-independent travellers (FIT) travellers who made and paid for all travel arrangements after arrival in New Zealand and semi-independent travellers (SIT) travellers who made and paid for at least one travel arrangement before arrival in New Zealand form the largest proportion of total arrivals (84%)' Tourism New Zealand (2008). The women in this study were part of this independent travelling sector, traditionally referred to as backpackers but due to changing patterns of behaviour in backpacking and due to self perception of travel style, there is no one label or definition that encompasses all. Later in this chapter it can be seen that 50% of the women in this study referred to their travel style as being independent and 32% referred to themselves as backpackers. According to TRCNZ (Tourism Research Council New Zealand, 2005) 'Interactive Travellers' are defined as 'regular international travellers who consume a wide range of products and services'. They are travellers who seek out new experiences, that involve engagement and interaction, and they demonstrate respect for natural, social and cultural environments, local people they meet on their travels and they share their own travel experiences' (TRCNZ, 2005). Backpackers are one section or group that fit the model of 'fully independent travellers' (FIT), according

to Bell (2008), who suggests they 'fit somewhere between Cohen's (2004) individual mass tourists and his explorers'. The attributes distinguishing these travellers from ordinary tourists, as with the women in this study, they are eager to meet other travellers and stay longer Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), they pre-book very little prior to their journeys but collect much of their information from the internet during their planning stage of the trip and from word of mouth interactions with other travellers during the journey. In their study the findings support these characteristics and the notion that the women favour participation in experiences as individuals or small groups. They visit New Zealand for the scenery, particularly enjoying sea kayaking, and scenic flights over glaciers, whale watching and hiking through spectacular landscape, and they prefer to be participants rather than observers. The findings in this present study show a very similar pattern of behaviour, although skydiving and dolphin swimming and hiking were the most dominant activities. All said, the women in this study could be referred to as FFIT'S (Female Fully Independent Travellers).

One of the earliest studies in New Zealand was an extensive quantitative 107-item questionnaire to examine the activities of 1985 travellers during the summer season. The questionnaires were completed in an airport setting in Auckland and Christchurch as travellers were preparing to leave the country, the results providing five distinct lifestyle segments derived from holiday and demographic characteristics (Parr, 1989). Ken Newlands (2004) completed a very similar comprehensive quantitative survey of 'Backpackers in New Zealand'. The market segment is a significant element of New Zealand's international visitor market. Backpacking was addressed as a social phenomenon, whereby demographics and travel motivation were major foci. Findings revealed the importance of the UK market and the increasing importance of the Asian market, in particular China, and recommended the 'new Asian backpacker' would be a good future target study group. 'The principle motivations for visiting New Zealand, included exploring other cultures and interacting with local people' and 'was

regarded as a trip of a lifetime' (Newlands, 2004: 234- 235). In countries such as Australia and New Zealand the backpacker travel industry is becoming a force to be reckoned with (Richards, 2004: 266).

### 1.3 THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.3.1 Aims: To investigate independent women travellers' experiences in New Zealand.

1.3.2 Objectives:

- To collate in-depth biographies of 'straight' and lesbian independent women travellers in New Zealand.
- To represent the voices of lesbian women and solo women travellers.
- To critically investigate the potential of travel to develop new identity perspectives.
- To critically examine the main motivational factors involved in female travel and destination choice.
- To critically investigate the challenges faced by female tourists before, during and after their journey(s).
- To critically evaluate the potential benefits travel experiences provide for women.
- To critically investigate the participation, by women travellers, in adventure activities in New Zealand, the adventure capital of the world.
- To critically evaluate tourism products specifically marketed for women and provide suggestions for the tourism industry based on relevant findings.

It has been argued that female tourism experiences, like their leisure behaviours, are constrained by male dominated cultural values and attitudes at destinations and by social constraints and restrictions

in their home society (Swain, 1995). Moreover, it has frequently been argued that social class and increased opportunity plays an important role in the structuring of their identities (Kinnaird and Hall, 1994). However, on the other hand it has also been argued that some women's tourism experiences - such as backpacking - can also be potentially liberating as they gain the freedom to express their often hybrid identities in new ways (Aitchison and Reeve, 1998).

The academic interest in backpacker tourism and independent travel has grown in recent years (Richards and Wilson, 2004). Backpacker journeys can be described as 'Self-imposed transitional periods, and for many self- imposed rites of passage' (Sorensen, 2003: 849). "Many Backpackers are at a crossroads in their life: recently graduated, married or divorced and between jobs" (Riley, 1988: 325).. Pearce (1995: 14) meanwhile has argued that 'backpackers are best defined in social rather than demographic or economic terms, and points to a criteria for budget accommodation, an emphasis on meeting other backpackers and locals and independent flexible travel plans'. Initially flights, transfer and initial accommodation in a gateway city is combined with organised excursions, treks, cultural tours, safaris, or spells of casual work. As Sorensen (2003) suggests, recent fieldwork data and information from specialised travel agents indicate a strong growth of the short-term backpacker segment.

Some studies report on backpacker gender distribution (Loker-Murphy 1996; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). Australian data suggests an even male/female split whilst authors from the developing world suggest a 60 male/ 40 percent female mix (Sorensen, 2003). The vast majority are aged between 18-33 years. Other than this literature as (Richards and Wilson, 2004) recognise there is little academic literature on women backpackers as a serious phenomenon. They point out that: "Perhaps because of the additional restrictions place upon their movement and behaviour, women see backpacking

differently. Compared with their male counterparts, females consider backpacking to be less sexy, less thrilling; less drug-related and less of a lonely pursuit... women are significantly more likely than men to be travelling in order to develop friendships with others... " (Richards and Wilson, 2004: 264); this research seeks to critically evaluate whether or not this assertion is indeed correct.

#### 1.4 THESIS OUTLINE

This introductory chapter presented a brief background and context to the research study. Chapter 2 reviews the contextual background literature to the study with particular focus upon gendered tourism research with some consideration of feminist and queer theory perspectives. Chapter 2 reviews the empirical literature available relating to women travellers with a particular focus on gender and tourism studies. Gendered space, embodiment, gender and sexuality are considered in greater detail. Finally it considers women travellers to New Zealand in an historical context in comparison to the contemporary independent woman traveller. It focuses on the limited literature relating to women tourist experiences, social constraints, the sparse lesbian tourism research and women and adventure tourism. Chapter 3 of the thesis explains in further detail the interpretative research paradigm and the qualitative methodological stance taken. The researcher's positionality, data collection, data analysis and the methodological limitations and reflections of the study are discussed. The following three chapters discuss the results of the research. Chapter 4 examines the sociological dimensions to women travel experiences in New Zealand, including their travel motives, benefits and identity issues related to travel as well as social space and interactions. Chapter 5 charts and discusses women traveller's adventure activities in New Zealand, including the risks and emotions they undertake. Chapter 6 considers the women's visual consumption of New Zealand's landscapes, the female gaze and the researcher's analysis of the women's own photographs of their visit to New Zealand which are considered in terms of three themes; firstly, landscape and wildlife photographs; secondly; landscape, self and activities;

and finally, cultural and social representations. Chapter 7 draws from the previous chapters to discuss and summarise the research findings, the relationship to the literature and research aims and objectives, the contribution to knowledge and the limitations of the study. It concludes the thesis and suggests directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The topic under review is that of independent women travellers and their touristic experiences, the meaning of travel in their lives and the benefits they gained from such travel on a personal level. In this review chapter, the conceptual elements of gender and tourism are considered in depth. The literature review in the following section is divided into five areas in total. Firstly, gender and tourism are considered through an identifiable five phase structure, resulting in the position in tourism today whereby gender acknowledgement and difference are being recognised and researched, this study being one such accomplishment. Secondly, the concept of gendered space, attributed to work in cultural geography and leisure studies is highlighted with relation to tourism studies. As cultural and feminist geography research agenda expands, space and place are increasingly being critically analysed and recognised as socio-cultural constructions rather than simply as physical locations. This has had significant consequences for tourism research. Thirdly, one of the most recent concepts being expanded and developed is that of embodiment and gendered tourism research and the role of the senses that can all be activated during touristic experiences. Fourthly, the relationships between gender and sexuality are considered with regard to queer theory, which has begun to incorporate a female perspective. The development of feminist influences more recently in tourism studies are considered to shed further light on the tourism studies arena. Finally, the historical role of women travellers in New Zealand contextualises the touristic experiences of contemporary women travellers.

## 2.1 GENDER AND TOURISM

There are areas of tourism literature where gender analysis has drawn attention to inequity in provision and participation as well as a lack of equality within tourism management and tourism employment. The most notable publication was undoubtedly Kinnaird and Hall's (1994) '**Tourism: A gendered analysis**' which draws together a collection of gender issues and tourism. They identify three issues central to the conceptual framework for understanding gender in tourism: First, tourism processes are constructed from gendered societies ordered by gender relations. Second, gender relations over time inform and are informed by the interconnected economic, political, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of all societies engaged in tourism development. Third, control, power and equality issues are articulated through race, class and gender relations in tourism practices. Citing works on imperialism and political economy analysis at global, national and local levels of tourism development and underdevelopment, the authors argue, '[t]hat tourism involves processes which are constructed out of complex and varied social realities and relations that are often hierarchical and unequal. All parts of the process embody different social relations of which gender relations are one element.' According to Kinnaird and Hall (1994: 100) 'all parts of the tourism experience are influenced by our collective understanding of the social construction of gender'. Gender is thus now being taken seriously as a variable in tourism studies. **Annals of Tourism Research** Volume 22 (Swain, 1995) presented a collection of papers that sought to incorporate gender analysis into mainstream tourism research. The majority of papers addressed issues where gender is an independent variable shaping the production and consumption of tourist sites, goods and experiences. For example, Cohen (1995) showed how the images of the Virgin Islands in tourist promotions is based on masculinised vision of nature, difference, desire and possession signed by the name 'Virgin'. Wearing and Wearing (1996), meanwhile, were also critical of the assumption that tourism marketing is consumed identically by all tourists - regardless, for instance, of gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity, they propose a '**gender agenda**' which would incorporate a feminised view of the tourism experience in future tourism research.

Henderson (1994b: 122) devised a five stage typology of 'gendered scholarship' to illustrate the development of gender studies through time. Published in the *Journal of Leisure Research* entitled 'Perspectives on analysing gender, women and leisure', she defines gender as a site of socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through people's actions, and a potential analytic framework for the study of women, and the behaviour of females as well as males. In the same article, Henderson (1994b: 129-130) gives a thoughtful review of feminism as expressions of a world view that recognises women's subordination documented by the study of gender relations and an awareness of the diversity and differences among women in terms of relative power and disadvantage. She goes on to warn leisure researchers to combat the impact of gender behaviour in their own discipline by keeping women a primary focus in their studies using the ideological lenses of feminism and the theoretical structures of gender. Concentration upon women-only experiences, views and opinions, was the focus of this study. Henderson's (1994b) format of phases is used in this study to demonstrate the progression in gender and tourism research. The first phase in her framework of gender scholarship is the '~~invisible/womenless~~ phase where men's experiences and perspectives were regarded as universal, stage two was the '~~compensatory/add women~~' and stir phase which was mostly male defined, women were acknowledged but without reference to a broader gender context. Stage three was '~~dichotomous/sex difference~~' phase as it suggests emphasised sex differences but again with no reference to a gendered context; stage four '~~feminist/ woman centred~~' phase where feminist aims were clearly defined and women and their lives became the focus. Finally, stage five '~~new/gender scholarship~~' where the specific focus was on socialisation and gender relations of both women's and men's experiences. This section will be structured using these phases as guiding headings and related to tourism research where possible.

### 2.1.1 The invisible women phase

Back in the early 70's when I began my travel experiences, women and gender issues were not represented in tourism journals; men's experiences and perspectives are regarded as universal, women were not explicitly acknowledged and could be classed as invisible at that time. Henderson (1994b: 122) established that 'little was written about women, let alone gender, in the leisure literature in the United States from 1940 until the early 1980s'. In a journal article entitled *The American Tourist* (Waters, 1966: 113) the lack of any mention to a women and quotes such as:

He can now sample the life in the most remote regions of the world, with an unbelievable ease and swiftness' and speaking of the merits of tourism market research 'we know who **he** is, where **he** lives, **his** income, **his** age... but **he** retains one mystery.....no one has been able to explain what turned **him** into an international traveller in the first place(Waters, 1966: 14),

This quote demonstrates well the cultural attitude, masculine language and male dominance of that time, (highlights added).

Generally in any social research at the time, research work was predominantly 'gender-blind'. Such views have been expressed by (Ireland, 1993; Richter, 1993; Warner-Smith 2000) and were critical as male orientated and maintaining women's invisibility (Aitchison, 1996; Norris and Wall, 1994; Swain, 1995; Veijola and Jokinen, 1994; Wearing and Wearing, 1996). As such women's experiences were overlooked and leisure behaviour research conducted used predominantly male participants (Deem, 1996; Little, 1997). It was noted that there is a prevailing male biased in tourism research where no allowances are made for gender differences as a result of gender bias which subsumes female behaviour into that of the dominance of male pattern (Breathnach, 1994; Pritchard and Morgan, 1998a).

### 2.1.2 The add women and stir phase

The late 70's and 80's saw women being added to the discourse of tourism, their perspective being considered relative to men without reference to a broader gendered context, a process referred to by (Stanley and Wise, 1983) as filling in the gaps. In her chapter on 'On the Beach, Sexism and Tourism' Enloe (1989: 40-41) concludes that 'tourism is profoundly gendered, based in, ideas about masculinity and femininity – and the enforcement of both – in the societies of departure and the societies of destination'. Thirteen years later than Waters paper mentioned above in 1966 another paper appeared in *Annals of Tourism Research* entitled 'Women: The Taste Makers in Tourism' (Smith, 1979). Through a statistical sample as well as interviews, the results showed the dominance of women as decision makers in destination choice, so much so that it was recommended to market through channels that women see and/or read. Women were attracted to "in" destinations and the travel later gained social approval at home. Barthos' (1973) paper *Working Women: The Invisible Consumer Market*, found that 'working women represent a virtually untapped potential travel market' and through a review of travel advertising stated that advertisers in 'all categories airlines, car rentals, hotels/motels – virtually ignore the working women'. Hawes (1988) discussed the travel related profiles of older women but 'few studies have explored the issues of motivation and barriers to participation for women' (Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Deem, 1996). Women were just beginning to be noticed during this time, but as Deem (1995b: 264) points out 'taking gender seriously means much more than noticing the existence of women'. Today articles, which are explored later in this chapter, are acknowledging that there is a women's market still to be exploited and that the needs and experiences of women differ from that of men.

### 2.1.3 The gender differential: Sex difference phase

The next phase of gendered research considered sex differences with regard to tourist behaviour, the women's perspective tended to be researched relative to that of men. Comparing the travel decision making behaviour of husbands and wives by Myers and Moncrief (1978) found that men tended to plan the routes whilst women and men shared other decisions such as accommodation. Swain (2004) emphasises 'the all pervasive nature of patriarchy and suggests that any feminist analysis of tourism must include a critique of gender relations in the production and consumption of tourism activities, images and not just in relation to employment'. Relatively little research has focused on distinguishing between motivations of male and female tourists' (Kinnaird and Hall, 1994: 97). One exception being that of Riley (1988) in a study, of young educated, long-term budget travellers, who found that women more than men said they wanted to travel to establish independence from their families and to feel comfortable with doing things alone. Kinnaird and Hall (1994) discerned a wide range of triggering factors including the need to: a) escape from domestic chores or a routine job, b) overcome a loss of emotional ties, c) experience the thrill of danger, d) demonstrate women's abilities'; e) and undertake scientific discovery.

### 2.1.4 Gendered difference in tourism

Swain and Momsen (2002) edited chapters in *Gender/tourism/fun?* based on presentations at a conference of the same name. The aims of the text were to explore the gendered differences in tourists' motivations and practices, as well as in employment conditions in host locales. 'The chapters are divided into three parts: gender-based studies of tourists, tourism workers, and intersections of the two. Swain's introduction to the volume is promising in that it employs a nuanced and up-to-date concept of gender, one that points to the socio-culturally constructed dimension of gender and its necessary

intersection with other externally imposed and individually chosen points of identification (such as ethnicity)' (Swain and Momsen, 2002: 1205).

Women and men have different travel motivations (McGhee et al, 1996) suggesting women place significantly more importance on cultural experiences, family and kinship, and prestige factors, while men rate sport and adventure more highly. Ford (1991) and Gibson (1996) suggest that holiday motivations of young men and women are different. However, Carr's, (1999a: 565) study entitled: 'A study of Gender differences: Young tourist behaviour in a UK coastal town', researching danger perceptions in an urban environment, concluded that; 'the results indicate that gender may not be the only influence on perception and behaviour, and that men and women should not be regarded as homogenous cohorts'. Collins and Tisdell (2002: 133,142) considered the 'Gender and Differences in Travel Life Cycles' and found that:

gender is a major influence on travel demand. Life cycle travel patterns for men and women vary considerably according to the purpose of travel' and 'in particular, the increasing participation of women in the workforce and the tendency for them to remain single and childless for a longer period may have an impact in the future, mainly with respect to female business and work related travel.

From a feminist/gendered perspective problems can occur because, as (Henderson, 1994a) points out differences found are merely noted and not explained, adding to the essentialist male/female dichotomy. By merely describing sex differences researchers are not explaining gender difference unless they explain why these differences might be occurring. Differences explained within the context of the social, the political and the economic; both constraints and opportunities give a better holistic understanding (Henderson 1994a; Kinnaird and Hall, 1994; Swain, 1995. In stark contrast to feminist studies of leisure, tourism research too often suggests that individual travel experiences are unfettered by social characteristics or by social norms (Jordan, 1998: 72).

### 2.1.5 Feminist women centred phase

The feminist phase or women centred phase researches the meaning and importance of women's lives, not necessarily in relation to men's lives, 'it examines the experiences of women' (Henderson, 1994b: 125). New development and new theories, 'have been very significant for feminist researchers, since they provide new ways of dealing with differences between women, and also offer a more sophisticated theory needed to explain the experiences of women in a variety of contexts and situations' (Deem, 1996: 8). Le Feuvre (1994) noted class and gender identity as key features of women's differential experiences of leisure and their subjective interpretations of the meaning of leisure.

### 2.1.6 New gender scholarship phase

Gibson (2001) thoroughly reflects on the gender and tourism research during the 1990's, distinguishing between research on 'gendered hosts' and 'gendered tourists', encompassing both supply (the hosts) and demand (the tourists). The position of the hosts, often depict women in a low paid domestic role, reinforcing gendered inequalities more markedly in third world host nations (Enloe, 1989; Momsen, 1994; Pritchard and Morgan, 2000). Secondly, the exploitation of women hosts and children (and men) as part of the sex tourism industry are well documented (Cohen, 1995; Jeffreys, 1999, 2003; Pritchard, 2001; Ryan and Kinder, 1996). On a more positive note, tourism creates employment for women, giving them a wage and perhaps some financial independence women. Opperman (1998, 1999) discusses the controversial issues of the economic benefits of prostitution to women.

More recently research on the gendered tourist has begun to appear (Gibson, 2001; Kinnaird and Hall, 2004). In response to claims for gendered tourist experiences and encounters to be considered, further research began to appear in the late nineties to date concentrating on the gendered and sexualised aspects of tourists experiences (Clift and Forrest, 1999a, b; Hughes, 2006; Jordan and Aitchison, 2008;

Meisch, 2002; Pritchard et al, 2000a; Westwood, Pritchard and Morgan, 2000). Gender shaped tourism experience in Miesch's (1995) lively account of trysts or romantic liaisons between touring Otavaleños and Gringas, is fuelled by the tropes or stereotypes of the Native American and Euro-American 'Other'. She examines the romantic and sexual relations between young foreign women (gringas) and indigenous men (Otavaleños) in Otavalo, Ecuador. Her article argues that gringa-Otavaleño relationships represent neither First World dominance over Third or Fourth World people, nor tourism as an expression of patriarchy, but mutual fascination with, romantic misconceptions of and sometimes economic exploitation of the other gender.

It is not a question of equation of women travellers having temporary local affairs in Ecuador, but rather a complex post-modern symptom of travelling. Aitchison (2005: 207-8) summarises the position of contemporary gender scholarship:

As the social sciences of the 1960s and 1970s have come to be associated with the rise of critical theory, materialist and structuralist approaches, so the last two decades of the 20th century will be remembered as the period when a number of social science disciplines began to experience what has now come to be known as the 'cultural turn' and 'In tourism studies this 'turn to culture' coincided with the turn of the new century where subsequent developments were evident in the publication of a range of feminist and gender research that embraced new theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and research techniques influenced, at least in part, by the developing poststructural literature in social science (Aitchison, 2000; Gibson, 2001; Johnston, 2001; Pritchard, 2001; Fullagar, 2002; Jordan, 2004; Jordan and Gibson, 2004; Kinnaird and Hall, 2004; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Ritchie et al., 2005; Ateljevic et al., 2006).

She continues by pointing out that as a consequence new academic journals promoting tourism, social and cultural geography and gender studies have appeared and have served to 'alter the course of the knowledge production process within tourism-related studies and to challenge the previously dominant paradigm of materialist tourism management'. (Aitchison, 2005: 208).

## 2.2 GENDERED SPACES, PLACES, LANDSCAPES AND TOURISM

### 2.2.1 Gendered Space

Through the work of authors such as Bell and Valentine (1995), Duncan (1996) and Anderson (1996) gendered space has emerged as a concept in leisure research and is being further developed in tourism research. 'Gender, as ideology and as relationships between the sexes, is a primary factor in human relationships, and is thus an important aspect of tourism social science' (Swain, 1995: 247). Duncan's (1996) edited collection of '**Body Space: Destabilising geographies of gender and sexuality**' brought about a collection of research identifying knowledge as embodied, engendered and embedded in the material context of place and space. Attention to gendered meanings of space have allowed scholars to move away from the determinism of a universal patriarchy (Acker, 1989; Smith, 1983) and toward viewing gender relations as specific to particular places and times (Bondi, 1993; Foord and Gregson, 1986; Massey, 1994; Rosaldo, 1980; Walby, 1989).

One example of research into space for women was by Aitchison and Reeves (1998) who investigated a woman only hotel, which was opened in London and provided a uniquely gendered space; the rationale behind the hotel being to provide a hotel where women were guaranteed good service and an absence of any unwanted harassment and where safety, both inside and outside the hotel was a high priority. Whether the approach behind the industry's challenges is purely an economic one, to attract women as the new market segment, or a feminist approach 'to bring about social change which will improve their life situation of girls and women' (Henderson et al, 1994: 214), management of women as tourists requires knowledge of the experiences of women.

### 2.2.2 Gendered Place

As the new cultural and feminist geography began to permeate the leisure and tourism research agenda, space and place are increasingly being critically analysed and recognised as socio-cultural constructions rather than simply as physical locations. As Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 13) contend: 'Place is a deceptively simple concept in geographical thought; we want to make it difficult, uneasy. We want to show that places do not exist in a sense other than culturally, and as a result that they can appear and disappear, change in size and character....according to the way in which people construct them. Places then have no objective reality, only inter-subjective'. Attaching social meanings to places has experienced resurgence as feminist geographers use socio-spatial theories to elaborate on both "the diversity and the solidarity of sisterhood" (Rose, 1993: 132).

### 2.2.3 Gendered landscapes

Historically, the term landscape has also acquired gendered meanings. Landscapes are shaped by discourses of patriarchy and (hetero) sexuality. Pritchard and Morgan (2000: 151) examine in detail the gendering of landscapes in 'The Male Gaze', one example they cite is by Chase (1934) who describes how in the English resort of South End was described as 'a tolerant, unquestioning mistress who takes her lover as, and for as long as, she finds him' while Scarborough was 'the courtesan among towns ... [with] the 'come-up- and -see-me sometime' life of sea view, bed and breakfast'. They continue to point out that:

This engendering of the world landscapes continues to be played out today as the 'masculine', 'technological' west and north turns it's gaze to consume tourism delights in the 'natural', 'feminine' landscapes in the south and east which offer feminine seduction and masculine adventure, attractions that are constructed to appeal to largely male, heterosexual tourist gaze' (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000: 894).

Interestingly, however, Mowl and Towner (1995), who interviewed women about their leisure experiences found that although Newcastle's notorious 'Big market' is a major leisure environment and tourist attraction, (mostly young working class, groups of men) and a 'place' of 'leisure', relaxation and enjoyment, it also became an environment of fear for others (some women), as it could become a 'place' of hostility, threats and fear, because of the behaviour of the men and sometimes other women.

Landscape has been feminized and sexualised throughout history (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000a). Several studies have established that tourism promotional materials (vacation packages and brochures) privilege male views (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000; Sirakaya and Sonmez, 2000; Wearing and Wearing, 1996). 'The feminine landscape seductively invites tourist to come and discover 'her', her treasures and 'heterosexually allure structures 'her' description. In contrast, masculinised landscapes like the Yukon offer an environment in which a man can rediscover and reacquaint himself with the 'real', 'natural' world. While there is romance and seduction in female and male landscapes, both of which will have some resonance with women and men, both are largely constructed' (Duncan 1996a: 197-211).

### 2.3 GENDER, EMBODIMENT AND TOURISM

Tourism research has more recently become aware of the embodied nature of touristic experiences as well as the visual, physical and social aspects. 'Until very recently 'the body' has been a silent or indeed an absent entity in tourism research, reflecting its masculine, disembodied research traditions' (Pritchard et al, 2007: 6). Other researchers also confirmed the absence of sexuality and the body in tourism and leisure research (Pearce, 1982; Henderson, 1994a, b; Swain, 1995; and Johnson, 1997). Nevertheless,

The body, although was for some time ignored by academic work, has become central to much contemporary debate and it is thanks in part to the insistence of theorists of gendered studies such as R.W. Connell, (1995) and feminists from Ann Oakley, (1972) to postmodern writers like Judith Butler, (1993) and Elizabeth Grosz, (1994) that the relevance of bodies in people's lives has to be addressed (Woodward, 2008: 76).

Woodward (2008: 84) goes on to point out that:

embodiment means that our bodies are who we are and are inextricably linked to an understanding of the self' and 'sexual difference is an important part of identity, whatever form it takes and embodiment stresses the relevance of gender in making up the self.

Moreover, '[t]ogether with this reconceptualisation of the body and rethinking of the fluidity of genders and sexualities has come a concerted challenge to the apparent neutrality of disembodied constructions of social scientific knowledge' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; cited in Pritchard et al, 2007: 7).

Tourists experience the world and destinations within it by interactions between their bodily senses and their physical surroundings; it is the physical presence of our bodies that adapts to new touristic environments and interacts with the new surroundings. One of the first significant articles was written by Vejoila and Jokenin (1994). In their article 'The body in tourism' they point out that academics have in the past been reluctant to acknowledge the embodiment of our existence. They make the point that holidays often revolve around bodily experiences, from sunbathing to dancing and drinking, and suggested that visual representations assist in creating the desire for their own body to be immersed in that context. Their 'work leads us towards an understanding of the bodily senses in tourism, in that the body provides a point of 'affordance between ourselves and our surroundings' (Crouch and Desforges 2003: 7). 'In arguing for inclusion of the body, they take their readers on a tour of ideas by (Krippendorf, 1987; MacCannell, 1989; Urry, 1990a; Lobfgren, 1985; and Rojek, 1993), contrasted to (Game, 1991) and (Butler, 1990), and a host of others developing a critique of tourism studies ranging from evocations of post modernism to gender trouble' (Swain, 1995: 256).

When considering the geographies of leisure and tourism Crouch (2000: 63) states 'embodiment denotes the ways in which the individual grasps the world around her/him and makes sense of it in ways that engage both mind and body'. Feminist geographers, influenced mainly by Judith Butler (1990, 1993) have focused mainly on a narrow gender politics of the body rather than a broad variety of societal implications. Authors such as McDowell (1992, 1996), Rose (1993, 1997), Massey (1994), and Duncan (1996 a, b) discuss a geography of fear, (see Valentine, 1989) whereby women's bodily awareness and vulnerability emerged as key factors in a feminist view of women's use of public space. The spatiality of the representation of the body and the movement of bodies in and out of various spaces is the main focus of the geographical perspective (see Parr, 1998).

According to Hottola (1999: 183) considering women backpacker experiences in India there are '[g]ender related differences to be found in the ways backpackers experience the 'Other' lived space and cultural confusion; differences based on their body and its constitutions in the society they visit' and he continues by arguing that 'the body does matter in tourism not only as a sexualised body but as a body which constitutes our interactions with lived space'. Previously visibility has dominated work on touristic experiences but Tuan (1993) points out that all our bodily senses are activated because travel and tourism are sensual experiences. 'Sensual geography' is an interaction between all the senses and therefore the sense of a place is itself a multi-sensory feeling (Porteous, 1985, 1986 and Rodaway, 1994). Rodaway's *Sensual Geographies* (1994) attempt to analyse the body, sense and space. Tourists are increasingly searching for the authentic experience in another space, an embodied experience with direct contact to nature and other peoples, one which they can experience, touch, smell, taste, hear and see for themselves (see also Tuan, 1993). Urry (1999) extended his previously visual bias, with regard to touristic experiences to that of 'Sensing Leisure Spaces' in which he

considers how leisure spaces are sensed by visitors and what is the role of the senses in humans making sense the natural and unnatural worlds.

Issues about why gender, sexuality and embodiment matter in tourism have also recently been considered comprehensively by Pritchard et al (2007: 6) 'As more and more reflexive and embodied research(ers) have engaged with tourism scholarship we have begun to shift and work has foregrounded and conceptualised sensuousness and embodiment (e.g. Veijola and Jokinen, 1994; Johnson, 2000; Franklin, 2003; Cartier and Lew, 2005), performativity (e.g. Edensor, 1998; Desmond, 1999), the senses (e.g. Dann and Jacobsen, 2002)'. Their volume explores body spaces and investigates how societies construct narratives of self and others as tourists, travellers and employees' (Pritchard et al (2007: 7). More recently, Veijola and Valtonen (2007) considered 'the body in the tourism industry', focusing upon commercial and business environments to 'unravel the actual techniques, performances and bodyscapes' of the travelling and working bodies in tourism and the gendered nature of the embodied experiences.

## 2.4 GENDER, SEXUALITY AND TOURISM

The links between sexuality and gender are theoretically and politically problematic. In part, 'the question of their relationship represents an ongoing debate between feminist and queer theory about the 'disciplinary turf' of the study of sexuality and gender and the process of establishing 'theory borders' (Richardson, 2007: 457). The 'cultural turn', and the rise of queer theory in particular, has led to an appraisal of gender and sexuality categories (Nicholson, 1994; Sullivan, 2003). 'Of particular importance has been the emergence of new articulations of identity associated with postmodernism, which have shifted emphasis from the binary logic and understandings of sexuality and gender as fixed,

coherent and stable, towards seeing these categories as plural, provisional and situated' (Richardson, 2007: 457).

Seidman et al (2006) produced a collection of original essays and interviews, discussing varied dimensions of 'New Sexualities Studies' including an interview with Jeffrey Weeks discussing the social construction of sexuality, Wilson discusses lesbian's and sexual identity, pointing out that 'life in the 50's and 60's was very much a risky, underground affair' and 'there were very few places lesbians could meet', and Valentine's series of publications (1993,1993a, 1993b, 1993c) in geographical journals confirmed the place of gender and sexuality on the newly mapped agenda of post structural social and cultural geographies. In particular, Valentine's (1993a) 'The geography of a lesbian community' drew attention to the role of spatiality as an important factor in shaping sexual identity, particularly in relation to leisure places and spaces. She went onto co-edit **Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities** with David Bell (Bell and Valentine, 1995) which focused upon the construction of sexual identities through a variety of leisure pursuits. Browne et al (2007) in **Geographies of Sexualities: theory, practices and politics** explore a number of themes including, sexualised difference, social relations, institutions, desires, and spaces.

Seidman (2004) goes on to argue that society, throughout history, has written women out of the story of society and history due to the dominant masculine standpoint in a patriarchal society. In addition, doubts have been voiced about the notion, almost unquestioned for almost two centuries, that science and science alone can yield objective social truths. He identifies two developments in particular that point to the changing character of social knowledge; from **objective to situated knowledge** and **the rise of post-disciplinary theory**. The new view of social knowledge has gained wide support: the idea of "situated knowledge". The idea that viewing knowledge as situated means that we always know the

world from a specific vantage or standpoint. A standpoint shapes how we see society (Seidman, 2004). For example, if we were prescribed spectacles with completely different prescriptions, 3-D (three dimensional) lenses for example our view of the world would differ accordingly, even if we focused on identical objects with and without the glasses. The second social theory development identified by Seidman relates to what he call "clusters" of debate. He uses the example of citizenship, sexuality, identity, gender, globalization, computerization and race. With further reference to 'Citizenship' he argues that:

engaging this field of theoretical debate means considering liberal social perspectives, that understand citizenship in relation to modernization and individualism, critical Marxist approach that make democratic participation the centre of what it means to be a citizen, political philosophy which debates whether citizenship is a status or a practice, feminist views regarding the gendered character of citizenship, queer perspectives on intimate citizenship and post colonial points of view that underscore hybrid ideas of citizenship (Seidman, 2004: 281).

A similar scenario could be applied to other concepts 'Identity' and 'Sexuality', both relevant to this study. The progress of feminism can be seen today with movements such as ecofeminism, postmodern feminism, lesbian feminism and cultural feminism. The economic, political and cultural processes associated with the broad evolution of 'globalisation' and 'development' are key influences shaping new femininities. The different subject positions women occupy, through different nationality, religion, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality are also seen as crucial in the construction of their gendered identities. Butler's (1990) ideas of theorizing sex as gendered, gender as sexed, and the material embodiment of identities inspired ideas about '**performativity**' have been important in representing sexual spaces and identity. For identity and sexuality to be socially performed in the tourism arena relevant social spaces and places are required.

### 2.4.1 Queer Theory

Gradually, questions regarding the relationship between sexuality, space, and tourism are being addressed and are no longer considered taboo in academia. Jamal and Hollingshead (2001: 63) reference to tourism studies “forbidden zone” of research highlighted the comparative lack of research. The emergence of Queer Theory during the past two decades has opened up new approaches for treating sexuality and gender as subjects worthy of consideration in their own right, rather than offshoots of general cultural theory. As a result a leap in the understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered has developed. However, little research has considered the role of tourism in the performativity and development exclusively of lesbian identities.

Queer theory is closely affiliated with the theoretical and political assumptions of feminist, gay and lesbian theories and studies. It adds a perspective to the social sciences and has itself been influenced by how post-structuralism conceptualises subjectivity and discourse. It draws upon three specific forms of analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Queer theory explores how heteronormativity organises and structures everyday life and ‘works to problematise heteronormativity as the dominating form of sexuality’ (Filax, 2004: 82). Historians report that heterosexuality and homosexuality were not a basis for personal identity until the early twentieth century. ‘It was a medical-scientific discourse announced to the public the existence of a new human identity: the homosexual’ (Seidman, 2004: 225). Post-war culture lead by the state limited the potential social development of homosexuals as they were labelled as misfits, persecuted, dismissed from employment and harassed in public arenas. The results of this socially constructed pressure meant homosexuals were by enlarge invisible, living or performing a ‘hidden identity’ or ‘closeted’ life (which still exists in some cases today) concealed within a blanket of fear, shame and potential ridicule and hence difficult to locate and research.

The economic, political and cultural processes associated with the broad evolution of 'globalisation' and 'development' are key influences shaping new femininities. This explains the background thinking and the creation of today's position with regard to western women's social, political, cultural and economic positions and consequently their potential opportunity to travel the world. It highlights the modern feminist movement's position of giving voice to women, silenced in the past and therefore unrepresented in history. It acknowledges the existence of multiple voices and the problems of past research treating women as a homogenous group and advocates the acknowledgement of diversity, whether it is nationality, religion, class, ethnicity, age, or sexuality which is crucial in the construction of their gendered identities. The development of 'Queer Theory' during the past two decades has opened up new approaches for treating sexuality and gender as subjects worthy of consideration in their own right, rather than offshoots of general cultural theory. Most gay tourism research is male orientated, however, and as such little of queer theory has directly been applied to lesbian women. The following chapter reviews the empirical evidence on women travellers in tourism studies with specific reference to New Zealand.

## 2.5 IDENTITY AND TOURISM

### 2.5.1 Identity concepts and theories

George Mead (1863-1931) is considered the founder developing theories on the emergence of the self. His theory of self maintains that 'individuals consciously manipulating and constructing identity in accordance with that 'conversation of gestures established through engagement with the social process' Elliott (2006: 30). Meads work underscores certain themes that have come to be very important in contemporary discussions about the self: 'Children develop a sense of identity through activity, creative engagement with others and the wider world; language and communication are pivotal

to the fabrication of personal identity and the self; and the development of self-consciousness is intimately interwoven with taking on the role of other' Elliott (2006: 31), all of which can be related to the tourism arena.

Goffman (1922-1982) developed his theory of self on the basis of observations drawn from interpersonal interactions thus further developed our understanding about self-identity, he maintained that 'identity might be constructed through the adoption of, and adherence to certain social roles and their validation by social institutions, but the individual is the creative and reflective agent who decides- and in so doing constitutes self-identity- on how to carry out such roles as well as the staging of performances' (Elliott, 2006:33).

More recently, the 1990's saw Anthony Giddens' extension of the theory of self by identifying the concept of 'reflexivity', a concept of immense significance for grasping the production of personal and social life. 'The reflexivity of modern life' states Giddens 'consists of the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constituting altered characters' (Giddens, 1990: 38) and reflexive biographies assist in constructing a rewarding self of the future through a process of "self-actualisation", self realisation (Giddens, 1991:77). People constantly produce and reproduce 'life stories on the basis of memories, interpreting the past through the lens of social information, and using this information to formulate present and future life stories' (Lawler, 2008: 19).

### 2.5.2 Contemporary Identities

'The emerging direction of contemporary social theory is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the attention it lavishes upon the nature of the self, self-identity, and individual subjectivities. Traditionally, in western society, a women's identity was defined in relationships to other ( as wife, as mother, as

daughter), in contrast to contemporary women who are able to define themselves by becoming active agents, referencing their own values and beliefs. Women can now choose to travel, can afford to fund their travel and can aim to gain specific qualification/benefits from their travel experiences. The present position in first world countries with regard to identity is described by Dencik:

Social affiliations - more or less inherited - that are traditionally ascribed to individuals as a definition of identity: race....gender, country and place of birth, family and social class, are now becoming less important, diluted and altered, in the most technological and advanced countries. At the same time, there is a longing for, and attempts to find or establish new groups to which one experiences belonging and which can facilitate identity- making.

Dencik (2001:6).

Identity formation is fluid, an ongoing process of redefining oneself and under constant review during life and in this case during an adventurous journey. One's personal identity is a conglomeration of many aspect and dimensions and is unique to the individual. On the global scale, nationality is a common aspect of identity, on a personal level, gender and sexuality are other examples. The very constitution of an identity is configured over time and through narrative, it is dynamic in nature, fluid and constantly reviewed and highly prone to change. With globalisation and increased personal mobility, according to Bauman (2006: 47): 'identity becomes a heated matter. All the landmarks are cancelled, biographies become jigsaw puzzles whose solutions are difficult and mutable. However, the problem is not the single pieces of this mosaic, but the way they fit in with each other'.

Similarly, Gidden's argues that 'self identities are no longer so firmly structures in advance of social hierarchies and traditional authorities, the modern individual faces a diversity of possible selves' (1991:5). He argues the importance of storytelling in gaining a sense of self and in orientating social

practices. 'Travel provides a new form of identity...in that she is now able to define herself according to individual experiences of the world rather than her position in the institution of the family' (Desforges, 2000: 935). Space and place are important components of gender relationships and associated identities. 'Historically limitations to women's mobility in terms of space, has in some cultural contexts been a means of control and subordination and also a limitation on identity. Women confined to home and local neighbourhoods by domestic and caring responsibilities are more likely to construct their identities around traditional 'womenly' values' Green (1998:177). In comparison, contemporary women have greater increased mobility, opportunity and financial independence, all of which, increases the potential of developing more complex, fluid and dynamic identities.

### 2.5.3 Tourism and Identity

'Self identity is understood as our own sense of selves as persons while social identity is categorisations of us by others' (Byrne, 2003: 443). Identity then exists in two ways, through the personal at an individual level and is also a deeply social category. Identities are socially produced and are 'lived out rationally and collectively. They do not simply belong to the individual; rather they must be negotiated collectively, and they must conform to social rules' (Lawler, 2008: 143). Byrne uses four elements to emphasis women's self identity: 'experiencing the self in interaction with others, developing the capacity for self knowledge, devising care and practices of the self, and being self-reflexive' (2003: 448). These elements are useful concept through which to examine tourism and identity.

### 2.5.4 Experiencing the self in interactions with others

Interaction with others invoked the idea of the constant awareness of the consequences of interaction, which in turn affects the sense of self. Travelling inevitably leads to interactions with both hosts and fellow travellers, either friends or new acquaintances. Becoming an accepted member of the travelling community, gives the individual a further social group identity, a place of belonging, a new social group

through which to develop associations. Abram, Waldren and Macleod (1997) consider the relationship between tourism and identity and suggest that tourism is caught up in an ongoing, never ending process of identification. Certain elements of identity can become of greater importance whilst travelling, nationality, religion, sexuality, for example. When speaking to strangers away from social constraints at home, there may be some elements a person may wish to keep private or may well want to make public..Homosexual identity which may be hidden at home due to social pressures, may be performed when away from, thus potentially strengthening that person's sexual identity.

#### 2.5.5 Developing the capacity for self knowledge

Byrnes second element concerns knowledge of the self and knowledge of known values. "Self Knowledge involves being conscious of the self, being aware of own limits and potentialities and in having a concept of personhood. Self knowledge is knowing who one is, having the ability to describe oneself to others, being able to talk about oneself to oneself" (Byrne, 2003: 452). When travelling interactions with other travellers requires the skills to talk about oneself, summarise oneself, and to gauge reactions, from other to the stories of oneself, to readjust and self reflect through listening to other stories. Independence and self reliance are assets developed and experienced through travel. There are 3 key moments on a travel journey where self identity can be considered: the decision to go on an independent journey, the activities and experiences on route and the homecoming and internet communication. 'Homecoming is when touristic stories are used to present new self-identities' Desforges (2000: 927). The main features of tourism consumption according to MacCannell (1989), is the search for authenticity which tourists use as a way of developing a self consciousness about their own place in the world. He argues tourism offers 'a way of gaining a bigger picture of the world, and thus the individual's place within it'.

### 2.5.6 Devising care and practices of the self

The third element focuses on caring for the self 'looking after the body and its needs, attending to emotions, feelings and affections, thinking about one's psychic and spiritual life' Byrne (2003: 453). For example, issues regarding safety, of solo travellers in particular, keeping in contact with home for emotional support, finding travel spaces to fulfill spiritual needs. The need for comfort, support, security and protection are all important issues under this umbrella.

'We seek and construct and keep together our identities whilst on the move' Bauman (2006:26). Individuals in everyday life use mobile phones and whilst travelling as in this study, both mobile phones but more importantly the internet. The internet being an important travel tool in the care of the self, with communication and contact with loved one's, an attachment to the family and friends of origin. The companionship of meeting new friends in the travel environment, is an attempt to become integrated and to fulfill self needs.

### 2.5.7 Being self-reflexive

The fourth element, involving the concept of reflexivity which involves for each women :

Considering the first three elements and attending to the information about the self as subjects that they generate. This information provokes contemplation and consideration of the self, which can be a potent source of change, but can also be used to justify and maintain status in self-identity (Byrne, 2003: 456).

Through the accumulation of touristic experiences an individual may construct the opportunity to develop, reflect and try to understand their own identity. In so doing they may subtly change their identity or display aspects of their identity that may be hidden in other places and spaces. 'Reflexivity can be regarded as the act of making oneself the object of one's own observations' Feighery (2006:

269). Self identity is then, 'the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography' (Latour, 1991: 53).

For example, the realisation that by planning and participating in a self chosen journey may increase a travellers' confidence and self belief and therefore change their view of themselves and the identity they project. The women in this study talked about what they termed 'me time', meaning a personal space to concentrate upon the self, totally excluding others, to help focus upon their lives, future directions and to achieve some relaxation. Travelling as an entity causes others to assess and reassess the identity of a person; be it that they are brave, interesting, or 'different' from the norm. Leisure contexts (tourism being but one), 'particularly those with other women', are important spaces for women to review their lives; assessing the balance of satisfactions and activities through contradictory discourses which involve both the mirroring of similarities, and resistance to traditional feminine identities' Green (1998: 171).

'The full process of the anticipation of holidays, the act of travel, and the narration of holiday stories on return are all tied up with an imagination and performance which enables tourists to think of themselves as particular sorts of person' (Desforges, 2000: 930). Often the decision to go travelling is related to moment in a persons life where self-identity is open to question. The process of identity affirmation may, as Schlenker (1984) suggests, consist of creating specific situations for oneself that serve to affirm desired identity images.

## 2.6 WOMEN TRAVELLERS TO NEW ZEALAND

For centuries 'it was frowned upon for women to travel without escort, chaperone or husband. To journey was to put oneself at risk, not only physically but morally as well. A little freedom could be a dangerous thing' and that 'the language of sexual initiation is oddly similar to the language of travel. We

speak of sexual 'exploits' or 'adventures'. Both the body and the globe are objects for exploration and the great explorers, whether Marco Polo or Don Juan, have been men' (Morris and O'Connor, 2000: 8). A brief assessment of the historical context of women travellers brings the contrasting opportunities for women travellers in the world then and now into sharp focus and demonstrates the interconnectedness between social, political and economic forces present in the travel arena.

### 2.6.1 Women Travellers in the Past

Historically, travellers have descended upon New Zealand's shores, arriving by sea, as pioneer travellers or more recently by air as modern day travellers and tourists. Lady Mary Anne Barker's, a Victorian woman in her classic book '**Station Life in New Zealand**' (2000) depicts life in the 1860's both at the homestead where she lived and her experiences during her travels around New Zealand. She led a privileged and adventurous life for a woman of her time and documented her journeys and experiences and eventually produced some 18 books. '**Tourists of Early New Zealand: Lady Travellers**' by Dawson (2001), compiles the stories and journeys of Victorian women regarded as New Zealand's first 'women adventure tourists'. Those considered as remarkable characters such as 'lady mountaineers' often had to fight against social mores of that time before they could brave the elements and take up the challenge of adventure. In 1897 and 1898, Constance (Connie) Asterley, aged forty six visited New Zealand with her long-term friend Margaret Shean, they stayed with many friends in New Zealand sharing their holidays and adventures and documenting their experiences. Enthusiastic supporters of women's suffrage, Constance (Connie) Asterley had entered into a passionate affair with Dorothy (Dolla) Richmond whilst in New Zealand. The following quote emphasise the social constraints prevented women performing and dressing in such and 'unlady-like' manner:

Being perfectly well aware that the average person's idea of a woman capable of real mountaineering or any sport demanding physical fitness and good staying power, is a masculine looking female with short hair, a loud voice and big feet, it always gives me

particular pleasure to upset this preconceived picture. In the year of grace 1910 a love of fresh air and exercise is not purely a masculine prerogative ... and should be quite easily associated with a love of beauty and personal daintiness(Dawson, 2001: 183).

Social constraints were much greater than today and only privileged women, who were well educated, had financial means and the desire to travel and make a stance against the socially constructed expectations of the time succeeded in travelling to such destinations as New Zealand.

An analysis of 'the tours and writings of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century women (such as Emily Sergent, Edith Wharton, and Mary Morris), combined with the study of late-20<sup>th</sup> century organisations (such as Alaska women and the wilderness and Woman ship), sheds light on the motivations of western women female tourists and the effects of tourism in its various forms on them. Further, such an investigation demonstrates striking similarities in the social and economic goals linked to tourism for 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century women. It is noteworthy that, Edith Wharton and Mary Morris, writing a century apart, set out with much the same goals. Each hoped to escape her mother's world, and each employed her travels as a source of creative professional production' (Butler, 1994: 488). The conclusions to the above mentioned study 'reveals the consistent role of tourism as a source of independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' (Butler, 1994: 498). These women, as independent travellers of their era are therefore comparable to the women in this study, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it is hoped that there are further comparisons possible.

### 2.6.2 Contemporary Independent Travellers

Hyde and Lawson (2003) conducted a study in New Zealand entitled 'The Nature of Independent Travel' and three characteristics that identified the distinguishing nature of independent travel; the traveller experiences an evolving itinerary, the traveller is willing to take risks in selecting vacation

elements and the traveller possesses a desire to experience the unplanned' (Hyde and Lawson, 2003: 13). Also, in New Zealand, (Hyde et al., 2008) found that almost half of YHA members staying as guests at the hostels were more than 36 years of age. Hecht and Martin (2006) agree, stating that backpacking is less about chronological age and more about travel style choices. Also included in the independent travel sectors are the adventure travellers sector (Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 2002).

Parr (1989) in her study noted that the distinguishing factor was the lack of pre booking and that independent travellers were not solely budget travellers but included travellers booking a wide range of accommodation (as in this study, backpacker hostels, independent hostels, lodges, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, and campervans) and transport modes (local bus, tour bus, internal flights, train and ferries). She also reported 62% of independent travellers arrived in New Zealand, without any prior booking and 90% travelled alone or as couples (as oppose to travel groups associated with mass tourism). These travellers seek freedom and flexibility in their travel itinerary. Poon (1993: 114) distinguishes between what he calls **the old tourist** and **the new tourist**, a group of tourists or 'consumers who are flexible, independent and experienced travellers, whose values and lifestyles are different for those of the mass tourists'. Hyde and Lawson (2003: 14) point out that 'despite the prevalence and importance of independent travel, surprisingly few leading texts, encyclopaedias, or handbooks of tourism take space to explore this phenomenon'.

### 2.6.3 Lesbian Travel in New Zealand

In terms of gay and lesbian travel, the Lonely Planet 'New Zealand Guide' (2006) devotes only three paragraphs to gay and lesbian travellers acknowledging the low profile status of this niche market. It points out that generally speaking New Zealander's are fairly relaxed and accepting of homosexuality and the gay community's prominence in Auckland and Wellington. The website 'Trip Advisor' (2010)

states that: 'New Zealand is a very welcoming open minded and diverse country to visit. In 2005, the New Zealand Civil Union Bill was passed to allow same gender couples the same rights in partnership as heterosexual couples. New Zealand promotes itself as a 100% PURE destination to visit, this philosophy spreads much further than just the "clean green" nature feel of New Zealand, rather spreading to how New Zealanders live and work in their country of freedom and beauty. New Zealanders are very accepting of people from all walks of life'. During my pilot study I discovered a network of owner and occupied accommodations and adventure tours, marketing to women only and in many cases were specifically targeting the relatively elusive lesbian travel market. This network is well coordinated and self supporting, and advertising through an easy to use website, womentravel.co.nz. The owner and accommodation provider of this site provided much needed background information and support to me as i expanded my research into the independent lesbian woman traveller. A snowball effect lead to meetings with other providers and other lesbian travellers.

#### 2.6.4 Female Backpackers

Cave and Ryan (2005: 472) maintain that 'female backpackers in New Zealand do adopt what have been traditionally regarded as adventure roles'. Similarly, the women in this study were not of the opinion that the adventure sports in particular were gender biased, there was no mention of not being able to participate because they were women, on the contrary there was an expectation and enthusiasm to perform and participate alongside their male counterparts as equals, a great contrast to the Victorian women. Pan and Ryan (2007: 472) findings 'indicate a tendency towards a gender-neutral society, where traditional gender differences are blurred'.

## 2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides a literature review relevant to women, gender and tourism forming the conceptual knowledge research informing this thesis. Initially, gender and tourism research are explored using Henderson (1994b: 122) five stage typology of 'gendered scholarship', originally applied to leisure research, to illustrate the development and progression of gender studies through time. Tourism literature research is quoted as examples relevant to each of Henderson's phases, to demonstrate the progression of tourism and gender research. In addition, the modern influences of cultural and feminist geography, sexuality, women's studies and tourism studies inform today's research study regarding new conceptual zones of gender and space; gender, place and landscape; embodied gendered research; gender and sexuality and finally, the changing role of women travellers in New Zealand.

The mid 1990s saw the first serious texts considering gender and tourism specifically, Kinnaird and Hall (1994) followed by a special edition of gender analysis in *Annals of Tourism Research* (Swain, 1995). Henderson's (1994b) format of phases is used in this study to demonstrate the progression in gender and tourism research. The first phase in her framework of gender scholarship is the 'invisible/womenless' phase where men's experiences and perspectives were regarded as universal, stage two was the 'compensatory/add women' and stir phase which was mostly male defined, women were acknowledged but without reference to a broader gender context. Stage three was 'dichotomous/sex difference' phase as it suggests emphasised sex differences but again with no reference to a gendered context; stage four 'feminist/woman centred' phase where feminist aims were clearly defined and women and their lives became the focus. Finally, stage five 'new/gender scholarship' where the specific focus was on socialisation and gender relations of both women's and men's experiences.

The concept of gendered space, attributed to work in cultural geography and leisure studies are highlighted with relation to tourism studies. Through social and political change, public spaces, traditionally male dominated are increasingly becoming available to women, and from a tourism point of view women are now searching for their own tourism spaces. The relatively simple concept of geographical place or a physical location is now recognised as being culturally constructed with social meanings attached, which as a consequence impacts on the consumption of tourism space and places. One of the most recent concepts being expanded and developed is that of embodiment and gendered tourism research. Tourists experience the world and destinations within it by interactions between their bodily senses and their physical surroundings; it is the physical presence of our bodies that adapts to new touristic environments and interacts with the new surroundings. The gendered body, it is argued, interacts in a way that is a consequence of its gendered history and constructs. More recently through increased gender awareness and the increased popularity in qualitative research, women have been researched in their own right, often as providers of tourism experiences but also through constraint theories. Traditional masculine adventure activities are increasingly being accessed by women travellers, but it is suggested that they experience adventure and benefit in different ways from their male counterparts.

The relationship between gender and sexuality is male biased in all fields of research but is considered with regard to queer theory, which mildly incorporates a female perspective. The development of 'Queer Theory' during the past two decades has opened up new approaches for treating sexuality and gender as subjects worthy of consideration in their own right, rather than offshoots of general cultural theory. Most gay tourism research is male orientated and as such little queer theory have directly been applied to lesbian women. Lesbian tourism research is sparse and often considered under the umbrella of gay tourism which is even more male dominated than is heterosexual tourism research. Only a handful of studies consider the lesbian traveller in complete isolation.

Contemporary western women's social, political, cultural and economic positions and their potential opportunity to travel the world are considered in comparison to historic women travellers in New Zealand. New Zealand provides a network of women only accommodation and activities for lesbian travellers and women traveller, which were accessed as part of this study. Increasingly women are being researched; one major step forward was made by Tourism Review International who published of a Special Issue on **Female Travellers** (2005).

The following four chapters present the methods used and the results of the semi structured, in-depth interviews. The qualitative interpretative methodology is explored and justified along with the specific methods used.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

The methodological or theoretical skeleton of an academic investigation is of paramount importance. Methodology entails a perspective or framework. The main problem that any women's studies face, on all fronts, is the male bias or that prevails in practically all disciplines and in most theoretical work done through centuries of scientific research. As a consequence, new qualitative methodologies and theoretical stances have had to be developed to address the new ways of thinking presented by women and about women. Selecting an appropriate methodology is dependent upon a number of factors, including the research problem and context, time and resources available, and whether breadth or depth of knowledge is required. Underlying this is the core theoretical framework on which research is based and the philosophical underpinnings rooted in this research enquiry are introduced in this section. This thesis is informed by an interpretive social sciences perspective and, employing qualitative research methods to collect and interpret data. Feminist precepts have guided the design and execution of the work in an attempt to 'lessen the dichotomy that traditional research imposes between that of thought and feeling, between the personal and political, between of observed and the observer, between "dispassionate" or "objective" research and "passionate" or "subjective" knowledge' (Madriz, 1998: 368). "Giving voice to the subjective experiences, these women become a focus of inquiry" (Stacey, 1991: 111).

### 3.1 A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm or perspective is 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplinary inquiry' (Guba, 1990: 17). 'Paradigms... can be characterised by the way their proponents respond to three basic questions, which can be characterised as the ontological, the epistemological and the methodological questions. The questions are the:

1. Ontological: what is the nature of the 'knowable'? Or what is the nature of 'reality'?

Interpretivists, who view the world through a post-modern lens, acknowledges the plural 'realities' which can be explained in a multiplicity of ways (Bryman and Burgess 1994; Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001), implying, therefore, that there is not one correct way to interpret social phenomena. The social context is of prime importance to the interpretivist ontology as it is the context that determines human behaviour (Neuman, 1997), without a context the behaviour would be meaningless. With relevance to this study, the intention was not to identify a single truth, but to discover and explore the many **truths** of the women traveller's experiences and their social interactions. To interact with them in their social worlds, to talk to them, listen to them and share time with them in an informal tourism setting. By acknowledging the ideas of 'inclusive theorising' (Henderson, 1994a; and Swain, 1995) a more productive investigation of multiple explanations for complex social phenomena can be explored.

2. Epistemological: what is the nature of the relationship between the Knower (the inquirer/ and the known (or 'knowable')?

On an epistemological basis, an interpretative approach acknowledges that the relationship between the researcher and subject (interviewee, participant) is subjective rather than objective as is the positive paradigm. It is the nature of the relationship between the researcher/s and the researched (participants) that forms a key epistemological debate. In essence the social context, my ideologies and the belief that the generation of knowledge and truth are social construction's for the foundations of this epistemological position.

3. Methodological: how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge? (Guba, 1990: 18).

In this instance I would reply with an acknowledgement that the world is interwoven with multiple realities; the approach is a subjective interaction between me and the participants and in order to gather knowledge from the empirical world a qualitative methodology is desirable. 'The assumptions that underlie social science research in tourism are seldom made explicit' according to critics such as

(Botterill, 2001: 199), who calls it the 'unspoken epistemology'. In an attempt to satisfy this concern I will outline the position of this body of research.

The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained by purely quantitative data' (Silverman, 2003: 89). The suggestion of deeper meaning refers to personal territories such as; inner experiences, emotional feelings, cultural understandings, bodily experiences or social interactions. Participant observation, personal interviews, photographic and textual data are the most common methods used in qualitative research. Focusing on induction and flexibility to search for an understanding, a meaning a description of lived experiences is an additional focus of qualitative research. In contrast, structured, quantitative methods from a positivist perspective emphasise theory, quantification, verification and replication testing. Surveys and questionnaires, often large in number, gather quantities of statistical data predominate in this perspective. In light of this methodological knowledge, in-depth interviews, along with textual data and photographic representations from the women travellers, were deemed most appropriate to this study. 'Scientific methods are not always appropriate for the problems encountered' (Walle, 1997: 524).

The rationale for using a post-positivist, interpretative approach is because this research enquiry is not concerned with analysing findings and identifying patterns or trends of tourist behaviour, on a large scale, but is concerned with understanding the meanings women attach to their tourists behaviours and experiences. In this case, the rationale for using the interpretative approach in this study is two-fold. Firstly, to gain an emic understanding by interpreting the meanings women travellers attach to their tourism experiences. Secondly, to evaluate the potential personal and identity benefits gained by the women from those experiences through interactive involvement.

Rapid growth of tourism during the 20th century has seen research interest shift from the supply side (e.g. the tourism industry sectors and government) to the demand side of tourism (the tourists). This research project will add to this shift in research focus concentrating upon 'the tourist and associated experiences' and more precisely 'the woman tourist' and her meaningful experiences. Due to the fact that the central issues in this investigation are concerning subjective meanings and experiences of the women travellers, a positivistic quantitative paradigm was not considered appropriate. Instead a qualitative, inductive framework was viewed to be appropriate, given the exploratory, socio-psychological nature of the study. Such a paradigm encourages richness, description and complexity of data, as well as giving the women voice to speak about their travel experiences and constraints in their own words.

### 3.1.1 The Interpretative Paradigm

The interpretive social sciences paradigm is founded in the real world setting of social science. It is 'grounded in the social world of the social actors and their everyday lives. This paradigm perceives that social actors are in control of their actions rather than pursuing their lives regulated by rules and actions without any agency of their own' (Jennings, 2001: 57). It requires me to be part of the social group being studied, to be subjective and again to use a qualitative research methodology.

Hughes (1990: 89) argues the fieldworkers adopting an interpretative theoretical and philosophical stance in post-positivist studies are an essential part of the construction of meanings, because: 'experiences of others can be grasped through the apprehension of their inner meaning'. The use of this paradigm in tourism research 'means that the researcher has to become an "insider" and

subsequently experience the phenomena' according to (Jennings, 2001: 40) who goes on to say that 'the insider's view is perceived as providing the best lens to understand the phenomena or social actors being studied'. This approach can be useful in a number of tourism settings, particularly those involving travel experiences, as in this study, but also to study other social interactional situations for example, host-guest interactions, host/resident experiences, and hospitality experiences. As a researcher collecting data under the interpretative umbrella, it must be acknowledged that any findings are representative of the study group and cannot be representative of the wider population as a whole.

### 3.1.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matters. Qualitative research has a long, distinguished, and sometimes anguished history in the human disciplines. As a common base from which to work, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1984:2) define qualitative research as:

Multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpretive phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves a collection of a variety of empirical materials-cases study, personal experience, introspective, life history, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe, real and problematic moments and meanings in an individuals life.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) allude, qualitative research provides a crucial perspective that helps scholars understand phenomena in a different way from a positive perspective alone. 'Equally crucial is the investigator(s) as an instrument because only the human instrument can grasp the interactions of context and the multiple realities that are known through tacit understanding' (Riley and Love, 2000: 168).

### 3.1.3 Qualitative Research in Tourism

Qualitative research is just one paradigm to be used in tourism research. A very concise overview of paradigms that inform tourism research can be found clearly displayed in table form in (Jennings, 2001: 56). Walle (1997: 524) examines the importance of:

quantitative versus qualitative tourism research' he recommends 'an eclectic approach to choosing research methods is recommended in light of the fact that tourism scholars and practitioners deal with complex phenomena and, as a result of rigorous, scientific methods are not always appropriate for the problems encountered.

He concludes by stressing that 'emics/art or etics/science must be determined by the situation in which research takes place, not by some misguided search for rigor simply for its own sake' (Walle, 1997: 525).

'Qualitative research has also had to wrestle with the argument that simply listening to, giving voice to and representing the silenced is not enough (even achieving that much can be difficult)', see (Wilton, 1999, cited in Crang, 2002: 648). "Qualitative research in tourism is often blamed for missing the tenants of 'good' science" and 'qualitative researchers often fail to explain how and why their methods are sound' (Decrop, 1999: 157). There are two major reasons for this; on the one hand, positivism is still the prevailing paradigm in many areas of tourism research. On the other hand qualitative research often failing to explain how and why their methods are sound can result in confusion and misunderstandings.

Riley and Love (2000) produce one of the first reviews of tourism research studies supported by the interpretative paradigm and assessments of qualitative analyses, using articles from four major journals. They concluded that 'there is little doubt that the "dominant paradigm" is positivism' (Riley and Love, 2000: 180) and contend that other disciplines have lead the way in challenging, what they call the "master paradigm" of positivism, providing new dimensions to the body of knowledge in their respective fields. Such a challenge has led to a greater acceptance of qualitative research as an alternative methodological approach with many authors encouraging and supporting the adoption of the qualitative

paradigm to research tourism and travel (Cohen, 1988; Decrop, 1999b; Henderson, 1991; Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Jennings, 2001; Riley and Love, 2000; Ryan, 2000; Walle, 1997).

The ambiguous relationship of tourism and qualitative methods can be illustrated by the work of (Townsend, 1995) where 'Women's voices from the rainforest' and 'Atlas of women and men in India' (Raju et al, 2000) both aimed to represent women's experiences, but used qualitative and quantitative evidence respectively as ways of gaining attention. Others have successfully applied this mixed methods approach (Choi et al, 1999; McIntosh, 1998; Oppermann, 2000; Moran, 2000; Riley and Love, 2000). Increasingly complex tourism questions are now being tackled by this use of a multiplicity of methods and tools, the concept of 'bricoleur' is used by Hollinshead (2004) to describe such a researcher. Greene et al (2004) discuss in depth mixed methods which involve combining quantitative and qualitative methods in social enquiry, as does (Cresswell, 2002).

Qualitative research has developed and has been cited as the best method to explore tourist experiences; their meanings from the tourist's point of view (Ryan, 1995; Small, 1999; Tribe, 2001). As Wearing and Wearing (1996: 240) contend:

in order to capture the individual tourist's construction of his/her experience, the meanings given and the remembrance of the tourist space, qualitative methods would appear to allow for greater variety of responses as well as being able to tap into the impacts on the self.

Evidence of the acceptance and increased use of qualitative methodology can be seen in the wide variety of applications it is now applied to.

#### 3.1.4 Feminist Informed Research

Although this research is not based on a strong feminist stance or perspective, it is informed by a few feminist precepts, which are considered below. Feminists have adopted various methods they have tended to prefer qualitative method. It is generally agreed that the method for women needs to be one in which women can present their thoughts and feelings in their own words rather than the words of the researcher. As Reinharz (1992: 9) explained: 'this asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for the women'. This study complies with this stance, in that it progresses on the premise that women's ideas, experiences and feeling, should and need to be documented. In its design, it employs a form of triangulation, whereby primary data is supported by other data collected by participant observation and the women's own photographic evidence, another feminist methodological strategy.

Such an approach regards women's everyday experiences as an important area of study which necessitates alternative methods of scrutiny. A feminist researcher's concern is to conduct research which reveals what is going on in women's lives and to undertake research that is non-exploitative. This research was non-exploitative in that I was an insider, on an equal footing to the women, was overt in my approach and used a semi-structured interview method, with greater flexibility to allow for individual representations. Women gathering together and sharing experiences with other women creates the potential to, stimulate and encourage social change and increase personal confidence and gain power in society, again a further perspective informed by a feminist stance.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION EXPERIENCES

This section outlines the data collection strategies used for this study of independent women travellers in New Zealand. Firstly, it briefly summarises the pilot study undertaken in Australia and New Zealand,

moving onto the primary data collection technique of in-depth interviewing, sampling, interview setting and management. Additional data collection is outlined, including a section on photographic data collection. 'Theory without data is empty; data without theory says nothing. This reciprocal relationship between theory and data is well captured by Coffey and Atkinson' (1996: 153):

data are there to think with and think about... We should bring to them full range of intellectual resources, derived from theoretical perspectives, substantive traditions, research literature and other sources...[ this means] that methods of data collection and data analysis do not make sense when treated in an intellectual vacuum and divorce from more general and fundamental disciplinary frameworks .

Accessing data is one very important aspect of a research study, gaining access to the setting can be difficult and compromises may have to be made, one humorous poignant example is that made by Douglas and Rasmussen (1977) who suggested that it would be important to disrobe and stroll in the nude in order to access participants on a nudist beach.

### 3.2.1 Pilot Study

In the year 2000 I was fortunate enough to experience a year long journey travelling the around the world. During this journey of a lifetime I came across many other women travelling alone, particularly in New Zealand and Canada. The women originated from a wide variety of countries, and more surprisingly from diverse backgrounds and age groups. I expected at the age of 42 to be the granny of the show, but this was not the case, there were many older as well as younger women than myself. As I communicated with my fellow travellers, mainly in youth hostel accommodation and on organised trips, I began to wonder what motivated women in particular to set off travelling, often alone. What did they actually benefit from the experience? Where did they choose to go and why? These same questions I began to ask myself and I thought further: Did these experiences affect who I am, me, my identity, and my life? If so how?

I explored some of the issues in my MSc dissertation entitled: 'Women tourists experiences from the North East of England' which also explored the age group variable. Then in a further academic paper entitled: 'Women as Backpacker Tourists: a feminist analysis of destination choice and hybrid identities from the UK', written with Professor Kevin Hannam, the themes of: safety, destination choice, motivation, were explored using focus group interviews. I presented the paper at an international backpacker's conference in Bangkok has now been published in a book entitled **Backpacker Tourism**. These two academic papers and my personal experiences have led to the development of this present PhD thesis.

My interest and fascination led me back to New Zealand, where I had encountered many women tourists and travellers on my past visits. In 2005, I continued on to Australia and New Zealand following an international backpackers conference in Bangkok.

Whilst there I conducted a pilot study for 3 weeks in New Zealand and 2 weeks in Australia, the purpose of which was to:

- Practice my interviewing techniques and discover the best way and place to meet other women travellers.
- Make a decision ahead of my actual data collection trip planned for the following year about what questions to ask, i.e. constructing my semi-structured interview questions.
- Establish contact with individuals in academia and tourism business providers.
- Familiarise myself with the accommodation and provision for women tourists in New Zealand.

Gorden (1992: 7) states 'interviewing skills are not simply motor skills like riding a bike: rather they involve a high order of observation, empathetic sensitivity, and intellectual judgement'. For these reasons I read widely about techniques, accessed previous practical experiences regarding interview techniques in an educational setting and felt it necessary to practice ones interview techniques before the actual event. This was one main objective of the pilot study as well as making decisions about potential areas of knowledge to probe.

During this pilot visit I produced field notes in the form of a travel diary, along with many photographs to help stimulate my thoughts. I also discovered an excellent web site, when looking for accommodation myself, '[www.womentravel.co.nz](http://www.womentravel.co.nz)'. This site provided many further leads to women-only accommodation, women providers of adventure tourism and 'Wwoofing' (Willing workers on an organic farm) an alternative tourism option chosen by both men, but mainly women, visitors in New Zealand. I decided to investigate further and journeyed north from Auckland to meet the website owner. The focus of my study expanded at this stage from purely women backpackers to other women visitors, particularly gay/lesbian women visiting New Zealand. As an 'insider', of the gay/lesbian scene I felt confident in interviewing and investigating lesbian women's motives and travel experiences. Equally, my professional experiences in teaching sport and outdoor activities to women and girls in particular for many years, provided solid background knowledge about performance, assessment of performance and qualified me to explore the provision of adventure tourism for women and to attempt to understand the personal benefit from such encounters. New Zealand itself offers a diverse range of tourism experiences, some specifically for women, and was therefore an ideal choice to explore my ideas further.

### 3.2.2 In-depth Interviews

The effectiveness of in-depth interviewing techniques when used by women researchers to study other women is undoubtedly a great asset in creating sociological knowledge which encompasses and expresses the experiences of women (Oakley, 1981). 'The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an **interview**, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (Kvale, 1996: 14) and Oakley, (1981) argues that interviews should be founded on a relationship of mutual trust. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 2) go further to suggest that 'qualitative interviewing is more than a set of skills; it is also a philosophy, an approach to learning'. According to Denzin (1989: 103) 'an interview is like a conversation', but a "conversation with a purpose" (Dexter, 1970: 136). As its name implies, in-depth interviewing refers to a prolonged conversation, usually on a one to one basis with a specific research purpose (Henderson, 1991; Jennings, 2005b) as a means of gathering information on the social world (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). There are a range of forms that such interviews can take, from completely unstructured, through to semi-structured Rubin and Rubin, (1995) to tightly structured, informal or formal (Finn et al 2000; Henderson, 1991; Jennings, 2005). Totally unstructured interviews, without the aid of a questioning schedule, rely on a fluid exchange and conversation, with little allowance for flexibility, improvisation or personal judgement on the part of the interviewer. Structured interviews consist of an ordered, structured list of questions that are strictly adhered to with each participant and are associated with the tenets of quantitative methodology. Such interviews are not as popular with the interpretivist researchers as they are deemed not to provide emotional and deeply personal information. Semi structured interviews, however, allow for greater flexibility and give the option to gather unique information from an individual; they are loosely guided by an interview schedule which enables some topic focus. Jennings (2005: 101) provides a detailed comparative chart the continuum of interview types.

Women travellers from around the world were questioned about their travel experiences in New Zealand by using a semi-structured interview method consisting of three sections. Firstly, each candidate was asked to complete a form to gather their basic demographic information, this took approximately five minutes to complete and included such questions as name, age, nationality, sexuality. Secondly, each candidate was interviewed for a continuous period of up to one hour using a digital dictaphone. Interviews varied in length between 36 and over 60 minutes. Thirdly, each candidate was asked permission to contact them after their return home by email in order to collect a written reflection about their journey with specific emphasis on any personal changes or developments, a small section from their personal diary and to collect two or three photographs with a short explanation as to the significance to their journey in New Zealand.

Semi-structured interviewing is 'an interactional exchange of dialogue, relatively informal style, thematic/topic centred/biographical/narrative approach, co-production of knowledge involving researcher and interviewee' (Mason, 2002: 62-63) and is valued for its production of thick descriptions of human behaviour (Brewer, 2000). The objectives of the present study was to generate data relating to what the women travellers undertook as part of their travels, to describe those experiences and ascertain what the positive benefits were from personal development and self image point of view. Seidman (1991: 3) points out that 'at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience'. Driven by these ontological and epistemological standpoint requirements the semi-structured interview approach was selected; with a conversation-like style, a semi-emergent and subjective design. By generating interpretative data gives the opportunity to grasp the meanings participants attach to their touristic experiences and encounters. This gave me space, freedom and flexibility, to change questions as the interview unfolded and to allow for the greater or lesser responsiveness to specific questions by the participant. It also

allowed for moments of understanding from interactive talk with participants to gain emic comprehensions of tourist behaviour.

Once the pilot study interviews were transcribed and analysed the information gained from “asking” rather than telling was used to construct a semi-structured questioning route for me, to use during the second visit to New Zealand. The pilot study, creating guided steps towards a common direction with each interviewee. A semi-structured interview guide was developed for the pilot interviews and was revised after what was learned from the pilot responses. Developing a loose structure helps give the conversations some direction, but rarely were they adhered to in strict question order or in time given to each question as the researcher maintained flexibility and responded to the individuals responses. The identification of questions was informed by literature on backpacker and independent travellers, gendered leisure, and a variety of touristic experiences. My previous knowledge gained from being or performing the role of independent traveller and physical education teacher helped me greatly in devising the schedule and probing specific topics that emerged. My perspective was therefore, that of an insider (emic) and was reflexive as a consequence. Empirical data was recorded and transcribed, and together with field notes they were textually analysed. Not all the themes were reported and analysed in this study as there was such a wealth of data, however, that wealth provided me with a great deal of knowledge about the women’s travel experiences as a whole entity.

### 3.2.3 The Interviews

The questions were designed in a manner that was based on Henderson (1991a) who advocates that sensitive interviewing should begin with broad questions and progress onto more complex personal issues. Initially, the women were asked to complete a short demographics questionnaire, giving me more transcription time on the more important issues and which contained one question about

describing their own identity as a means of focusing their attention on themselves and who they were. Questions were left as open and flexible as possible in an attempt to allow the women's narrative to flow at their own pace, for them to expand on areas and issues of specific importance to them as individuals and allowing for their individual interpretation of the questions (Reissman, 2002).

60 were interviewed in total. The interviews took place during the 2006-7 summer season in New Zealand between December and March. I identified the target group of woman travellers from the general population by their presence in target accommodation or by the fact they were carrying luggage usually in the form of a rucksack or a trolley bag out in the street or on various forms of transport; they were easily identified. They were randomly selected, through this 'purposive' sampling, although a small amount of 'snowballing' occurred unplanned in two ways. Some women were asked if they had other friends staying in the hostel who may like to be interviewed and a number of women who heard about me through the grape vine, approached me and volunteered to be interviewed because their friend or sister had enjoyed being interviewed and they wanted to participate. I interviewed one of the Columbian sisters but shortly after leaving me, the three sisters arrived to find me asking if I would interview them the following day as they were doing some work in the hostel and had no time in that day. One woman who had just found out about me woke me up at 11pm to ask if I would interview her because she was leaving very early the next day. Snowballing sampling is also referred to as 'network sampling' where respondents are used to initiate contacts with other informants (Bloch, 2004) and identifying people who are interested in the research topic (Duval, 2003).

My process of seeking out women who will satisfy the aims of the researched inquiry is referred to as purposive sampling. They are individuals who can provide specific and purposeful knowledge about a specific social phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Neuman, 1997). Purposive sampling is a useful

and popular method applied in an interpretive, exploratory research approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Women traveller's who were travelling independently, not as a tourist or on an organised coach tour or staying hotels, were purposefully sought to provide narrative about their independent travel experiences. Some providers were also interviewed, again these were randomly selected in a purposeful manner.

### 3.2.4 Interview Locations

The interviews were conducted at locations along main tourist routes in both the north and south islands of New Zealand. The interviews were conducted in three main 'spaces': in outdoor public areas e.g. Christchurch City square; in hostel, lodge or campground accommodation, either in my room (usually a shared dormitory) or in common room area (kitchen, dining or common room) as well as on various forms of transport, including: bus, ferry, train and plane. Interviews in outdoor locations were mainly held in day time, whereas interviews in hostels were mostly at night. In terms of the context of such research, Elwood and Martin (2000: 649) discuss "how the physical location or interviews affects discussion". Hence, where possible relaxed, quiet, informal surroundings were chosen to conduct the tape-recorded interview.

Interviews were predominantly one to one, but occasionally focus groups or pair interviews were conducted because of a variety of reasons. One group of Swiss and German women preferred to be interviewed together so that they could help one another with translation if necessary. In reality this worked very well and the participants were well disciplined to speak one at a time so that their voices would easily be transcribed. It was also obvious just by observing their body language that, they were interested in one another's answers, had more time to consider their own answers and were sometimes stimulated by other interviewee's answers. Another group of 4 women at a woman-only lodge very

much enjoyed listening to their partner and their best friend's views about travel and travel experiences and were surprised to learn how differently people view the many aspects of tourism even people they thought they knew well. In total 60 interviews were achieved, the participants represented every continent except Africa and were aged between 19 and 75. They were predominantly European in origin, white, well educated and one third of those interviewed identified themselves as lesbian.

According to New Zealand's Ministry of Tourism statistics (2005) the two most frequently visited RTO's (Regional Tourism Organisations) by backpackers are Auckland (76.8%) and Canterbury (in Christchurch) (68.6%) due to these regions being the main arrival and departure points. Rotorua, the forth most visited information centre by backpackers with 55.7% was the next most important tourism hub visited as part of this study. In 2005, 43% of backpackers travelled using scheduled bus services and inter-island ferries whereas other independent travellers tended to use private and rental car (59%) and were therefore less visible on transport systems but were targeted at accommodation facilities.

These face to face interviews themselves were performed in a variety of locations in New Zealand during a three month period, from December 2006 to March 2007. The majority were inside in hostel accommodation, in quiet areas, common rooms, sometimes dining areas and dormitories chosen by me.. I was aware of providing a pleasant, warm, secluded location for the participants to speak openly and honestly, a place where we would be uninterrupted, away from potentially prying eyes and ears. An informal setting, allowed for relaxation and hence potential quality data collection. Any distraction for either party can interrupt the thought patterns and one can easily lose the train of thought. The interview length varied in duration from 40 minutes to 80 minutes, although the majority were about 60 minutes, possibly long enough for both to concentrate.

### 3.2.5 Interview Management

Sometimes I shared a hot drink or something to eat before or during the interview, this served as an icebreaker between two virtual strangers who were about to embark upon, perhaps intimate stories. The interview situation was assisted greatly in this instance because the process of meeting strangers and quickly having in depth conversations are common practice between women travellers. Some did, however, appear or state they were a little nervous but once started there were no occasions where nerves took the better of the person. I acknowledged and adapted to a wide variety of nationalities and personalities and occasionally noticed a mirroring of language style and use of language as a way of establishing trust and effective communication. Normal conversational behaviours such as, adaptive body language and speech patterns and speech speed, particularly with participants who are native English speakers, are particularly encouraged in qualitative interviewing (Minichiello et al., 1990).

The number of interviews managed each day varied, dependent on my location, whether in transit or not, how many women were available that day to be interviewed and how I was feeling. The maximum in one day was four interviews and the minimum two. Depending upon the spacing of the interviews three a day was more than sufficient from a physical concentration point of view and secondly having time to absorb and think about what had been said. Making supplementary notes was a very useful practice..The evening time saw the majority of interviews, which is the time when most people are back from their daytime activities, making meals and generally relaxing in the accommodation spaces. Occasionally background noise became a problem, so sometimes the interview was halted for a short space of time in order to find a quieter location. During the data collection period I slipped a disc and had medical treatment which affected interviewing possibilities. However, through a determined effort, some interviews took place in my dormitory due to me being bed bound.

Before the tape recorder was set into action, I introduced myself including some information about my own background as a traveller, a teacher and other informal aspects. This served two purposes, one, to relax the participant and two, by giving of oneself a rapport can be initiated and a genuine impression given of this interview will be a two way process and not full on pressure in one direction. Hopefully, the participants were, therefore, not intimidated and ready to tell their own stories in a relaxed setting to someone who cares. The research encouraged the participants not to regard the process as a formal interview but approach the interview as a woman to woman discussion (Spradley, 1979). 'In qualitative interviews there should be a mutual exchange of information and /or experiences' (Jennings, 2005b: 108). This exchange is termed reciprocity, Oakley, (1981: 49) comments 'no intimacy without reciprocity'; meaning without the two way exchange the researcher is less likely to achieve an intimate setting through which personal information is parted.

Approaching travellers in the street and on public transport or on trips and persuading them within those initial few minutes to be interviewed about their personal feelings is to most not an easy proposition, but I really enjoyed the challenge and benefits developed from it. On paper it is not an easy task but, possibly due to my interpersonal skills and the openness and time available to the women travellers, we were able to conduct some very productive interviews. I had very few refusals, only 3 outright 'no' responses out of 63. A handful were due to time constraints, buses or people to meet but all agreed to give me their email address and I would, at later date send out an email version of a questionnaire.

Post-interview, the women were thanked for giving up their valuable travel time to participate. They were also asked if it would be possible to be contacted a few months down the line to provide a short written account of the benefits if any they gained from their travels and to provide a few meaningful

photographs, again with a written description of the photograph's particular significance to them. I noted any unspoken observations as soon after the interview as possible whilst fresh in the mind. The reactions of the participants and their enthusiasm and other such general comments, helped me to remember the particular person, often from idiosyncrasies and, to help remember the mood and atmosphere of the interview setting. How to approach and record field notes is well documented by (Lofland, 1971). Once I had returned home and downloaded the digital voice files, the task of transcribing could begin. The verbal narrative was transformed into a written form ready for data analysis and coding. This rich, detailed, in-depth personal data concerning the women traveller's behaviours, experiences and meaningful feelings and emotions was complemented with the photographic evidence already mentioned and other additional data.

### 3.2.6 Interview Confidentiality

Apart from some demographic data being recorded on paper during the initial stages of the interview, the remainder was tape recorded, with the permission of the participants. Assurances were given of confidentiality, and the women were reminded that the tape could be turned off at any time. This did happen on two occasions when one woman began to get upset, she was homesick , resulting in my becoming a counsellor and on another occasion where a friend needed to interrupt the conversation. Initially, some travellers were inhibited by the presence of the recorder but once they became absorbed in the interview they soon forgot about it being there. Once the interview was completed informal and general conversation ensued, often lengthy and containing more relevant information to the study which I then made notes about as soon as possible after the event. During and after the interviews many of the women 'were curious about other women who had been interviewed: did they share similar experiences? Were there other solo women travellers out there like her? What had they said?' (Wilson, 2004: 88). As with fellow researcher quoted above, I tried to converse and share such information whilst

maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. In this study a promise was made to send a summative record of the generalised results in a short document via email, once the study is completed. These extended interactions often developed intimacy and trust and on some occasions friendship. On at least five occasions I and the participant joined forces the following day to explore New Zealand as independent travellers. From such friendships developing the I keep in touch with several participants.

### 3.2.7 Asian Interviews

The Asian market, namely Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese are specifically targeted by New Zealand Tourism authorities and groups of young Asian women are visible in all parts of New Zealand but are unfortunately under-represented in this study due to language barriers; the Asian travellers on the whole, displayed pigeon English and I was unable to provide adequate translation. A specific study of the Asian women, perhaps in comparison to the European women would be of great interest. The Asian women were always observed in the street or at iconic locations and in the hostels, particularly the woman only hostel in Christchurch, in small groups often in threes and fours, never usually alone (unlike Western women), constant communication and social interaction seemed to be of great importance to them, purely from an observation point of view. They were often observed watching others participating in adventure activities and were constantly photographing 'anything and everything'. They congregated at New Zealand's most famous icon's and were observed in large numbers in Rotorua queuing for the Lord of the Rings tour buses and the Maori evening cultural shows. On a number of occasions I shared dormitory accommodation with them, particularly at the women only backpackers and women only floors in the larger hostels. They spent much time talking and conscientiously writing up their diaries. It was particularly frustrating not to be able to access this group of women. I acknowledge that not all segments of women tourists in New Zealand were represented in this study. The scope of the study, the expense involved particularly in visiting accommodatios and the

logistics, excluded those women staying in more expensive accommodation such as bed and breakfast, hotels and the luxury end of the market.

Finally, some of the women commented upon how the interview itself had been an enjoyable experience because it had prompted them to think more about themselves and their journey. I felt that given the opportunity to speak in depth about their experiences was an empowering experience for some of them and they enjoyed the fact that someone was actually interested in what they were doing and why they were doing it. Patton (1990) notes that an interviewee can learn about themselves through the reflective process of an interview.

### 3.2.8 Secondary Data Collection

The primary data collection was through a series of semi-structured interviews with women travellers who were randomly selected. I travelled around New Zealand along the main tourist routes and in addition I also interviewed a number of key informants, people professionally involved in the tourism provision and research in New Zealand, hostel and lodge owners, adventure tourism providers and academics. The information collected from interviews was supplemented, and supported by a review of tourism literature available in New Zealand, official marketing advertising materials, NZ official tourism websites and archival literature from university libraries, local libraries and bookshops. Academic sources included information gleaned from two tourism conferences held at Otago University, in South Island. One was Tourism New Zealand's annual conference, and the other a South Pacific tourism conference. Informal discussions with other academic, at these conferences helped me glean knowledge and important contacts in New Zealand. In addition, numerous casual conversations and informal discussions about women tourists throughout the research journey contributed immensely to understand and ultimately assisted analysis. Formal interviews were recorded and transcribed, in

contrast however, informal interviews were not recorded although usually notes were made afterwards in regard to any relevant or interesting details that arose.

### 3.2.9 Participant Observation

Participant observation added a further dimension to the data collection, one being the greater visibility of women backpackers travelling in comparison to men and a significant number of women travelling alone. Participant observation is often seen as the method *par excellence* of qualitative research (Brannen, 1992; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). As already discussed, qualitative research usually depends on participating with a specific group, in their own environment and interacting with them in their own language, on their terms. Developing an insider position is required in order to understand the details in depth (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). The social world combines people, texts, and symbols to create a particular blend of reality. It is possible to observe this reality in physical spaces. Riley (1988) immersed herself into the backpacker way of life for her study encompassing several destinations. As a field worker at times I became part of that reality, was a fellow guest at the hostels, a visitor eating an evening meal with other lodge guests, a group member visiting the lesbian owned café and a camper at the annual lesbian camp. My role of observer varied, sometimes there was a strong identity with fellow travellers, and other times a closer identity with the owners and providers I kept a research diary of these observations, including behaviours, interactions between travellers, as well as the physical setup. The women participating in physical adventure activities were observed, so this was independent travelling in action. There was no overemphasis on the daily writing, or long accounts been written, but sufficient for the purpose. One of the major benefits has been my own reflective comments.

Participating in the independent travel experience helps gain access to personal knowledge and direct subjective experiences, providing a strong foundation for understanding others. There is always a

danger of getting too close, but standing back and looking from the outside on occasions maintains a healthier balance. Patton (1990) points out that participant observation provides an open, discovery orientated, inductive approach and so, can contribute to the validity and reliability of the qualitative research approach. This approach can be used as a means of triangulation, a process to double check and support interview findings.

### 3.2.10 Photographic Data

Photographic evidence was also collected and serves as a means of backing up the verbal data gathered. All respondents were asked to provide, by email, two or three or more photographs if they wished from their personal collection which symbolised and represented their travel experiences. 'Photographs provide evidence that you have been away, that the mountains were that high, that the weather was so good. At home, afterwards, visual images are interwoven with verbal commentary to remember the experience and tell others about it' (Crawshaw, 1994: 14). 'This process of memory production is significantly social and involves working at the realisation of memory' (Middleton and Edwards, 1990: 12). Photographs have meanings and stories that are unique to the individual and give an insight into what it is about the destination or attraction or interaction with either, that is important. They can, therefore, provide added information about the motivations and destination choice and personal enjoyment of the women tourists. I felt that this method may produce further in-depth personal information regarding, 'the meaning' of travel to the women and the most important features of the 'travel experience', which would hopefully back-up other findings. In this case the participants were asked for a brief description/ summary of their three photographs and the meaning of that photograph to the women..

"The 'visual' is centrally important in the construction of touristic memories" (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997: 178). When we are away from our usual surroundings, all our senses are heightened by the experience of different food and drink, temperatures, sound and so on (see Rodaway, 1994). But it is the visual images of places that give shape and meaning to the anticipation, experience and memories of travelling. 'Everyday expressions such as 'seeing the sights', 'capturing the view', 'eye-catching scenery', 'picturesque villages', 'pretty as a postcard', illustrate the significance of the eye to the traveller and the travel promoter' (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997: 178). Visitors themselves help to construct their memories through the photographs they take and postcards they purchase. Tourism involves going away from the normal environment and coming back again, with sunbathers, souvenirs and snapshots. 'Despite the fact that taking photographs is perhaps the emblematic tourist practice and that tourist studies have been dominated by a visual paradigm of gazing, remarkably little sustained research has explored the general connections between tourism and popular tourist photographs' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 2). In the conclusion of their research entitled 'The Family Gaze' Haldrup and Larsen (2003) comment upon women as the family photographer, 'It seems that women are the most passionate performers of the 'family gaze'; they take most responsibility in, and pleasure from, making family-memory stories (photographs). In this sense the family gaze breaks with the arguably implicit male basis of the 'tourist gaze'. It represents a feminine gaze as it stresses interactions, relationships and active embodied use of space. 'The gaze in fact amounts to much more than just a 'way of seeing'; the family gaze produces photographic events typified with dense corporeal performances - acting, posing, directing and framing and so on. The 'family gaze' produces photographic images that escape being just dead images. For the owners, photographs are "full of life" (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 20). Tourist photographs convey inherently personal stories and the distant analytical gaze has little access to their inner emotional universe. Instead we become systematic readers of their culturally-collective-inscribed conventions and meanings.

Through picture taking practices, tourists strive for the accumulation of idealising memory-stories that make the fleeting tourist experience a lasting part of their personal and familial narrative. What intrigues people about their personal photographs are that they enable them to travel back in time: to connect with, and revive memories, events and people through imaginative travel.

The fascinating power of photographic images is not so much the pictures themselves, but the unseen stories that exist, or can be activated, beyond the frame in a future communal context: 'Well it is that you can bring it forth again. You evoke some memoirs from the tour or experience that you had in relation to that photograph, and it is funny to share them with other participants; or with other people, you can tell what you have seen and what you have experienced. It is the experience behind it that is important. Not so much the image itself (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 14).

Good experiences, bad experiences, good sights, bad sights are all part of the tourism experience. Telling travel stories is the central part of conveying the meanings of travel. In addition photographs are a strong means of enforcing, reminding, conveying and re-enacting the experiences.

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The interview approach in this study generated an overwhelming amount of data. Perhaps this should be expected, asking women to talk about their lives, experiences and sharing. They were very enthusiastic and as (Finch, 1999: 69) found 'initially I was startled by the readiness with which women talked to me as I expected to have to work at establishing some kind of rapport' (Oakley, 1981). The problem was never, long silences, pauses with no response, on the contrary my skills of focusing responses on one topic at a time were tested. Most of the women had a lot to say, were quite open and enjoyed sharing their experiences. Comments made demonstrated that interviews can be for some rewarding, positive and of therapeutic benefit (Kvale, 1983; Letherby and Zdrodowski, 1995). 'Women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to women researchers, even if they have some initial anxieties about the purpose of the research or their own performance in the interview situation' and 'the friendly female interviewer, walking into this situation with time to listen and guarantees of

confidentiality, not surprisingly find it easy to get women to talk' (Finch, 1999: 69). I could have easily extended the interviews, but felt that maintaining the quality of questioning meant a limit of one hour was sufficient. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews was in depth and rich in descriptions and was reported in a narrative form. The text was spaced out to easily locate parts of the conversation and the moderator's questions and comments were highlighted in italics. A brief summary was produced from each transcript for easy reference. Qualitative research, in the past has been criticised for being unclear and difficult to determine how the analyst formed conclusions (Neuman, 1997). Some qualitative authors have produced detailed text to aid researcher in overcoming this difficulty (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Jennings, 2001). The following section clearly presents the approach to data analysis and coding in this research study.

### 3.3.1 Grounded Theory

'Grounded theory is a systematic qualitative research method' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 24) providing an interactive framework for data collection, data analysis and enables the researcher to inductively generate theory. Theory unfolds from and is literally **grounded** in the data, (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) hence its label 'Grounded theory'. There are no clear cut rules but grounded theory is the most widely used in qualitative research (Bryman, 2004). It is an iterative process by which the analyst becomes more and more "grounded" in the data and develops increasingly richer concepts and models of how the phenomenon being studied really works' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 279). Grounded theorists 'want to understand people's experiences in as rigorous and detailed manner as possible and they want to identify categories and concepts that emerge from the text' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 278). Transcripts from interviews are read and re-read, line by line, and the analysis begins with proofreading the material and simply underlining key phrases (Sandelowski, 1995). In a process called "open coding" the investigator identifies potential themes by pulling together real examples from the text (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The size of the theme is whatever seems to be the unit in the data: perhaps a sentence, a few words or a paragraph, this can be observed by the variation in quote sizes presented in the results section. The code applied is a label, provisional and can be subject to change. Some pieces of data may straddle several codes, but these conceptual categories arise from the data.

Primarily, an inductive approach that searches for underlying themes or patterns of meaning within a particular social phenomenon (Riley, 1996), are derived directly from the words of the social actors being researched (Cresswell, 1998). The structure of the data is therefore built bit by bit as categories emerge that are linked together, to form concepts and themes that compared and contrasted. 'The end results of grounded theory are often displayed through the presentation of segments of text-verbatim quotes from informants – as exemplars of concepts and theories' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 280). All the interviews were transcribed on returning from New Zealand, and these were analysed and coded. As themes appeared, relevant literature was reviewed and new literature sought to help develop theories and constructs to represent the data. Data coding and management is elaborated upon in the following section.

### 3.3.2 Data Coding

Qualitative data analysis using codes involves reflection by the researcher and is time-consuming. 'Such reflections need to be recorded, which again reinforces the need for memos' (Jennings, 2003: 202). During the process, I employed a range of strategies to sort the data, including, straight forward note making, diagramming relationships, flow charts and flexible thinking (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). The main method was that of coding, assisted by the above mentioned techniques. There are several methods of coding to choose from:

Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to 'chunks' of varying sizes- words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one (e.g. a metaphor) (Miles and Huberman, 1994:56).

The transcribed interviews were analysed in a traditional manner (Agar, 1980). Thematic analysis 'is a means of generating thick descriptions of human behaviour and 'indexing the data into categories and themes' (Brewer, 2000: 109) and to organise data so that it can be interpretatively scrutinised (Holliday, 2002). The data was open-coded which refers to 'the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61). In tourism research, (Stephenson, 2002 and Duval, 2003) use this type of thematic analysis on their data to produce interpretively meaningful, reflexive text.

Relevant categories of textual items were identified and manually coded. For example, parts of the text indicated their physical and adventure experiences, with both positive and negative feelings associated. Various categories were created and the parts of the interviews were assembled belonging to the same topic, and arranged accordingly. 'This is an iterative process in that some of the codes will break down when it is found that a particular pile of material contains significant differences and needs to be re-coded in more detail. For example, 'Whilst researching Viking heritage tourism I developed a simpler code for authenticity, but then re-coded the material as I attempted to tease out distinct types of authenticity' (Halewood and Hannam, 2001 :193). From a practical point of view, coloured paper and coloured ink were used as a means of segregating data into categories, and sub-categories. The main four themes initially identified were physical, social, psychological and visual. After this initial coding the data was subject to more coding that identified categories within each of the areas of interest, sub-

themes Further sub-themes produced the following categories: physical and adventure activities, environmental interactions, personal development and travel benefits, social interactions, communication, technology and diaries, reflective thoughts and advice, cultural exchange and visual issues were initially identified. Finally, some categories were selected and grouped together and written up in chapter form. The results that are presented in Chapter 4 consider the psychological and social dimensions to travel; Chapter 5 examines women travellers' adventure experiences in New Zealand and Chapter 6, considers the visual consumption of New Zealand's landscapes. Due to the large volume of qualitative data generated, only some factors are actually processed and have become a part of this thesis, but others will be used in other work.

#### 3.3.4 Photographic Analysis

I also analysed the women's own photographic images which i had collected via email. I requested a few meaningful photographs and some text to accompany the images. A well used method in tourism for analysing travel brochures and travel literature, is that of content analysis, and is equated with reliability and the quantitative paradigm. It is used to analyse large numbers of photographs, demonstrated by (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 89) who analysed 600 photographs produced for **National Geographic**. Although successful they did point out that 'quantification does not preclude or substitute for qualitative analysis of the pictures'. Partly because of the small number of photographs and the rich potential of qualitative analysis, and due to academic comments, as above, a qualitative method in line with the rest of the study was chosen to analyse the photographs.

I used qualitative analysis; composition and semiology as it was felt that they were best suited to the photographs along with the accompanying narrative, to extract any meaningful evidence concerning exploring issues of self and identity of the women. *Visual Methodologies*, a text by Gillian Rose, (2001)

provides in-depth description of visual methods. According to her, 'compositional interpretation is methodologically silent, relying instead on that exclusive thing called the 'good eye', content analysis is methodological explicit. Compositional interpretation is useful in the initial stage 'of getting to grips with an image that is new to you and it remains useful as a way of describing the visual impact of the image' (Rose, 2001: 52). It involves examining the primary components of a photograph or still image; its content, the colour, the spatial organisation and any content displaying expression. Initially, results in this study showed the women had selected photographs of; New Zealand's scenery, New Zealand's wildlife, New Zealand's culture, and people shots, sometimes within the landscape sometimes dominating the photograph.

For this semiology (sometimes called semiotics) was used as a technique to further extract data by searching for 'signs' as semiology means the study of signs and semiology is 'centrally concerned with the construction of social difference through signs' (Rose, 2001: 96). Williamson, (1978) classic semiological study **Decoding Advertisements**, cites many critical writers from the social sciences, including Barthes, Foucault, Freud, Lacan, Marx and Saussure.

The sign is a unit of meaning; for example one type of sign is that of the "connotive sign, which carries a range of higher meanings" and one example, relative to tourists photographs is that of a synecdochal sign which is either a part of something standing for a whole, or a whole representing a part. Thus the city of Paris is often represented by a picture of one part of it, the Eiffel Tower: the image of the tower is a synecdochal sight of Paris as a whole (Rose, 2001: 82).

In this study the photographs of the Maori dancer represents the country of New Zealand but could also represent an authentic experience. The semiological analysis provided photographs of sights and local culture as well as photographs that captured personal experiences and humour. The relationship between the signifier (the sight) and its signified meaning (green landscape means New Zealand, the Maori dancers represent the Maori cultural history, the colourful sunset is romantic) is socially constructed. The theory of the tourist gaze would suggest that tourists see particular sights as signs of

culture which they wish to consume for status or for fun. Urry (2002) views tourism as a collection of signs and of gazing as a consumptive act, some of the women's photographs contained in the 'self and landscape' theme show the subject firmly positioned central to the view and thus consuming part of that view.

### 3.4 RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS

Researchers from both the positivist and interpretative paradigms, aim to produce valid, authentic and trustworthy knowledge of human experiences (Merriam, 1998). There has been great debate in the interpretative social sciences literature about establishing research credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1994). Both paradigms are concerned with issues of credibility,, believability and accuracy (Cresswell, 1998). The issues surrounding the debate relate to what constitutes good research; from a positivist perspective: objectivity, validity, reliability and generalisability (Neuman, 1997). The interpretative perspective considers that the tenants of scientific perspective does not necessarily apply or are relevant to their way of researching and have therefore developed their own range of techniques and terminologies for determining the 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These are considered in the following section.

#### 3.4.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the information collected by the researcher truly reflects the phenomenon being studied. 'Leisure and tourism work is fraught with difficulties in this area, mainly because empirical research is largely concerned with behaviour and attitudes, and is reliant on people's own reports' (Veal, 1997: 35). Validity, according to (Denscombe, 1998: 241) 'hinges around the extent to which research data and the methods for obtaining the data are deemed accurate honest

and on target'. Positivist paradigms and their associated scientific, quantitative methods produce data that is respected for its valid accounts of reality due to their systematic and measurable ways of proving or disproving hypotheses (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Various safeguards exist to establish the validity of qualitative data. Yin (1989) has stated that the data should be documented so that another person could follow the chain of inquiry through to the report. Therefore, all interviews were tape recorded since "the use of recorded data serves as a control on the limitations and fallibility of intuition and recollection" (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984, as cited by Heath and Luff, 1993: 398). A back up tape and a limited amount of very brief notes were made at key points during the session. The collection of data and the presentation of data are equally important and both need to be addressed. 'Claims for validity based on researcher/research object separations have less credence than previously, and with this evolution in the epistemology debate has come calls for **greater transparency** in the presentation of both quantitative and qualitative research strategies to show what values underlie the research and how the data are constructed' (Rose, 2001: 6).

#### 3.4.2 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which the report would be the same if the research were replicated at a later date or with a different sample of subjects. 'Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same results each time' (Babbie, 1990:132). Repetition in natural sciences can be reproduced easily due to the strict control of experimental conditions. Social sciences are not so rigid and are dealing with human beings in an ever changing social situation. 'Whilst a single person's report of their behaviour may be accurate, when it is aggregated with information from other people, it presents a snap-shot picture of a group of people, which is subject to change over time, as the composition of the group changes, or as some members of

the group change their patterns of behaviour' (Veal, 1997: 36). One example of this relevant to this study would be, the opportunity to travel independently for women is a relatively recent phenomenon as some of the older participants have witnessed. Historically, in their younger days they did not have the financial independence, the social expectations were to get married, stay at home and look after the children in the domestic sphere, all subject to social change. If therefore women were interviewed in the 1960's for example, the response would have been very different. Equally in the future, hopefully more women from different cultural backgrounds and at present the poorer third world countries, will gain the opportunity to travel independently and will therefore bring with them a different perspective to those who are privileged at present. 'While measures can be taken to ensure a degree of generalisability, strictly speaking, any research findings relate only to the subjects involved, at the time and the place the research was carried out' (Veal, 1997: 36). According to Jennings: 'pilot testing is an analytical tool' (Jennings, 2001:152) carried out prior to this study, in an attempt to develop an effective tool for gathering data and adds to the reliability of the study.

Secondly the reliability of a study is also dependent upon a further human factor, the researcher's reliability. 'Ethnographers tackle the problem of reliability by reflecting on their own involvement in the research and assessing their own impact' (Finn et al., 2000: 28). Merraim (1998: 204-205) suggest that 'peer examination', in addition to triangulation and researcher acknowledgement of bias is a further technique used to enhance credibility.

### 3.4.3 Triangulation

'Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). Denzin (1989) suggests four types of triangulation- data (various sources of data), investigator (several researchers on one project), theory (using several theories or perspectives) and

methodological (using several methods to gather data). Janesick (1994: 251) suggests 'a fifth type of triangulation: interdisciplinary' (using both qualitative and quantitative methods together). Triangulation is also a feminist methodological strategy. In this study, as well as the interview data I collected photographs and reflective text from the participants as well as other textual data as a means of looking at the research targets from different perspectives, hence improving its claims for validity. However, one of the main aims of this was to further the depth and dimension to what the women were saying not specifically to improve its validity. In other words in this study a form of 'theory triangulation was practiced, where I involved 'several theories or perspectives to analyse data' (Jennings, 2001: 151), namely interpretative and 'methodological triangulation involves researchers using several methods to gather data relevant to a study' (Jennings, 2001: 151) as mentioned above.

#### 3.4.4 Rapport

I was very aware that 'the success of an interview was dependent upon establishing, rapport with the participants' (Jennings, 2005b:107) and the interviewer needs to establish some trust with the respondents (Cicourel, 1974). Time was taken at the beginning of the interview describing myself as a fellow independent traveller and that I was looking to share our experiences and meanings of travel and represent the women who are often forgotten citizens. I had only three refusals, one outright lack of interest and two who didn't have sufficient time available. I dressed and behaved like an independent woman traveller so had instant credibility. Being a fellow traveller, in typical traveller settings immediately gained some trust and respect. 'Credibility of the interviewer links back to gaining access to the field. The gatekeepers and participants need to see the interviewer as credible (and trustworthy) and the interviewer must be able to assume an insider role and be accepted as an insider, and

subsequently use the language of the people being studied and be respectful of their values' (Jennings, 2005b: 111). Also, particularly with relation to the younger members I felt my age (late forties) also afforded some respect and admiration. My interpersonal skills of being friendly and confident, speaking in a relaxed manner were of benefit in the interview situation. I also felt my experience as a physical education and outdoor education teacher assisted me in understanding the conversations particularly with regard to adventure and its associated emotions, physicality and the feelings of achievement. Being trained to assess movement and body language and verbally encourage individuals (as in the teaching environment) were also useful skills with regard to interviewing techniques. Having interviewed both staff and pupils as part of my occupation gave me a firm base on which to progress.

#### 3.4.5 Reflexivity

A final methodological concern is the role of myself, the researcher in the research. The degree of closeness between researcher and subject varies according to the type of interview or observation and the position of the researcher on the insider/outsider continuum (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Early feminist discussions celebrated the merits of "insider" interviewing. They argued that in studying a group to which one belongs, one can use one's knowledge of that group to gain deeper insights into their opinions and experiences. Moreover, the researcher and the researched are on a relatively equal footing, reducing the likelihood of exploitative power relationships (the classic statement about this is (Oakley, 1981). 'The interview ideally becomes a mutually reinforcing process; or at least, the researcher and researched establish common understandings based on, for example, recent motherhood or being perceived by members of dominant linguistic group in a society' (Rose, 2001: 24). In contrast to this is "outsider" research. Studying a group to which one doesn't belong was considered to lead, at best, shallow research (Acker, 2000) provides an excellent review of the debate. However, it must be remembered that the more one identifies with a society or group the more biased one may

become (Lund, 1993). That having personal interests in and prior knowledge of, a topic leaves one open to criticisms of bias, of preconception and lack of openness. Fielding and Fielding (1986: 32) suggest that one of the main sources of bias in qualitative research is a 'tendency to select field data to fit an ideal conception (preconception) of the phenomenon'; I was very aware of this and made every effort not to fall into such a trap

Conducted by "insiders" – researchers who belong to the same social or cultural group as the people they are studying – or by "outsiders"? This question has been long been an object of debate by researchers in the qualitative tradition, and has been an important issue in the circles of feminist research for the past two decades.

'When is [being an insider or an outsider] a key to insightful analysis? When does it stand in the way of clear thinking? How do we even know when we are inside or outside or somewhere in between? (Acker, 2000: 190).

Researchers are increasingly discovering that their identities and statuses can be fluid, even in within a single research project. "Typically, an interview situation requires an effort to find common ground and emphasize whatever 'side' of oneself will make the best match to the other. As we are not chameleons, this search is not always easy" (Acker, 2000: 205). Within the same interview, the degree of empathetic connection between researcher and researched can vary depending on the topic being discussed at the moment (Dyck, 1999). 'The researcher may represent, for instance, the expert knowledge of an academic institution, a woman with children with some common interests, or a person with whom concerns can be talked about in a safe environment' (Dyck, 1997: 198).

#### 3.4.6 My Background

I had travelled independently around the world for one year in the year 2000, as well as many other short term visits. This gave me first hand knowledge of the many aspects and feelings associated with independent travel, but only from my own and other travellers I met some years ago. As much research acknowledges, there are a spectrum of women characters and types; including variations such as nationality, age, religion, and therefore my own view is just one perspective. I was very interested, as were the other women travelling about how I fitted in, were my experiences the same as other, what were the differences? Therefore I was searching for more differences in experiences as well as similarities to my own, and was constantly aware of my own experiences and to avoid bias. My travel career began in 1978 as an original backpacker who hitchhiked around the United States of America for two months, a very different experience to that of today's independent travellers.

Awareness of these debates was never far from my mind and therefore just their existence governed, at times the construction of semi-structured interview questions and the interpersonal interview process itself. A continual consciousness of the degree of personal involvement during each interview existed throughout the research, similar to the degree of balance required between two gymnasts attempting to achieve equilibrium using their own body weight as counter balance. However, ideas of 'neutrality' (Patton's, 1990: 55) give the opportunity to step out of the objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy. He suggests that the neutral investigator acknowledges his/her subjectivity is unavoidable but does not allow it to take over. The commitment is to seeing the world as it actually is, reporting the positive and negative findings. He acknowledges that when dealing with subjective material, sometimes complex, may be interpreted differently from different perspectives, dependent upon personal judgement which can be seen as an important aspect of qualitative research.

I needed to develop the ability to quickly establish rapport with the individual they have just met; firstly to persuade the person to co-operate and volunteer to be interviewed and secondly to establish trust through, in this case, commonality, upon which to develop the interview. I found the interviews in New Zealand, on the whole mutually beneficial, a very positive experience and the interviewees on the whole also had positive experiences, judged by the body language and relaxed and open responses during the interviews by the verbal comments immediately after the interviews and in email correspondence since the research event. The key interview informants were facilitated by my familiarity with the social world of independent travelling and by staying in and being seen around the same accommodation led to me being easily accepted as one of the group. Accepted as one who would understand and empathise with the stories and experiences the women travellers reported, after all I was one of them. Reflecting on the experience, the background knowledge was of great advantage in understanding elements of the research and in establishing some of the areas I wished to explore through questioning.

### 3.4.7 Ethical Issues

The ethical considerations relevant to this study are, professional integrity, relations and responsibilities toward the respondents, relationship with research participants, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. Mason (1996) points out two ways in which ethical research can impinge on qualitative research, firstly rich qualitative data can access both public and private lives (as with the sensitive data on sexuality in this study, for example) and secondly during the course of the interview, ethical dilemmas can occur. Further information on ethics in research can be seen in (Homan, 1991). The need for ethics in the administration of tourism research is considered in (Jennings, 2004: 98-99), whose key points of the rights of the individual summarised are:

voluntary participation, informed consent, the right for participant to refuse to answer, the right to withdraw, the right not to be deceived, not to be harmed, to have personal information and data treated as confidential and/or anonymously and finally the right to access the research findings.

In this study the participants were asked if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed. Confidentiality is about protecting the individual from potential harm when research results are made public. In reality this means that the personal details of participants are kept secret, protecting the individual from potential harm and maintaining the trust of the participant. The women were reassured at the beginning of the interview that the data and their details would be treated confidentially and they would remain anonymous. Henderson (1991: 72) notes that the challenge of interviewing within the naturalistic paradigm is to 'unlock the internal perspective of every interviewee'. Bearing this in mind the impact of the research needs to be considered by the researcher (Merriam, 1998). In this study even though the participants were mostly speaking about positive aspects, some talked about a relationship breakup at home, being unemployed and one woman was very unhappy at home, and assessed by me as having a low self esteem. She became emotional once she began to speak about her reasons for travel, the resulting discussion became more of a sympathetic, encouraging counselling session, reminding me of counselling sessions with children whilst teaching, as this was much more appropriate to this woman's needs at that time. The tape was switched off fairly soon after the interview started and any snippets of potential data were recorded in my diary at a later time.

Respect and curiosity was shown by myself at the beginning of the interviews, in line with ethical norms and conventions. Having good social interaction skills I developed rapport very quickly and as a good listener was able to absorb the stories and accounts of the women. Good listening skills, both intensive and attentive are crucial, and the researcher maintained concentration and attention at all times, (Rubin

and Rubin, 1995) showing respect for the women speaking and to maintain professionalism. With regard to the relationship between myself and the participant, in this study I was aware that the time taken to speak to the participant was time out of their independent travel schedule, therefore the I always checked or arranged to see the participant at a convenient time for them to prevent intrusion into their schedule. 'The tourism researcher is trying to gather data from people involved in activities, the very nature of which (as discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 in this study) is to get away from the intrusions of everyday life' (Jennings, 2004: 101). Evening relaxation times were popular with the women, and some enjoyed being interviewed in transit, on buses or trains as this was often a leisure time or even wasted time anyway. The gatekeepers, usually hostel and accommodation owners in this instance, 'are trying to protect the interest of their clients' (Jennings, 2004: 102) were approached to ask for permission to interview on the premises and often whether they also would be willing to be interviewed as a provider.

### 3.5 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Jennings (2005b: 108) describes the role of reflexivity in qualitative research:

In qualitative interviews, the researcher assumes a subjective position. As a consequence of this epistemological stance, the researcher will engage in reflexivity throughout the entire research process. Reflexivity is the process by which researchers reflect and consider the impacts of their personal subjectivities and consequences of their participation in the research process and report on the same in their writings.

In this section I reflect and considers the methodological limitations. The limitations centre on the qualitative paradigms and the justification of methods with relation, and comparison to the quantitative paradigm. Firstly, the relatively small sample participants in comparison to a quantitative survey were selected, which makes it difficult to generalise these sixty women's experiences to a broader population of women travellers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The study did, however, capture depth and richness of

meaning from travellers from different cultures and nationalities, and from different age groups but they were predominantly from first world locations. In qualitative research a small sample is not seen as a limitation but as a necessity, as (Merriam, 1998: 208) points out, 'in qualitative research, a single case or small non random sample is selected precisely **because** the researcher wishes to understand the peculiarity in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many' (emphasis in original). The aim in this study was never to generalise, but to study both heterosexual and homosexual women's experiences of travelling in New Zealand.

Again the study is limited in the fact that New Zealand is only one country or destination where independent women travellers explore, they often travel down through several countries in South East Asia, before visiting Australia, then New Zealand, many travel to Fiji and other Pacific islands. Different destinations and locations offer travellers different packages and therefore different experiences. New Zealand is particularly noted as being 'the adventure capital of the world' and as such the women to participate in adventure, their experiences being presented in Chapter 5 and as a beautifully aesthetic location, resulting in Chapter 6 on visual consumption and photographic representations. Other countries were more culturally exciting, according to reflective and comparative comments the women made during their interviews, the food, the smells (good and bad), the people, their behaviours were different from first world destination and would therefore generate a different response.

Although the women did talk about safety in New Zealand it was again in comparison to other destinations, New Zealand was considered safe and few incidents were reported, like a stolen camera. However on the very day I landed in New Zealand a hitchhiking woman backpacker was tragically murdered in a national park, a very rare incident for New Zealand. As a consequence I did ask for the women's comments on this incident; there was a mood of shock and sadness in the hostels, a fear if he

would strike twice. It took many weeks to capture the culprit, unnerving the backpacker community including myself. This issue of hitchhiking was discussed and the general consensus was that it was not a good idea on your own, but maybe safe in two's or threes. Safety is nearly always an issue with women travellers, and women in general, but apart from this one incident there was insufficient evidence generated to include in this study.

Other criticisms of qualitative research include the fact that it is too subjective, it is difficult to replicate, it is difficult to generalise and it isn't transparent. This is judged against the objective stance, which implies correctness and degrees of correctness depending upon how close or distant the research comes to conforming to positivist ideals. In addition, on a further subjective note, the findings may be limited by the skills, experience and understanding of the individual gathering the information. Human error and human inconsistency and unreliability could be weaknesses that affect the management of the study, theoretically. However, this could equally also occur in a positivist arena where the human interface interacts with the data. Suggestions by (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), that rather than being judged on reliability in the conventional sense; which refers to whether research findings can be replicated in a future study, the ideas of 'dependability' or 'consistency of results' may be a more appropriate. In the individual interview situation the researchers asking the questions and probing responses may bias the results. It may be argued that the sole researcher interviewing could provide a consistency of results and could therefore be a strength. Others would argue that a team of interviewers, each doing a small number of interviews, could overcome this potential hazard. It may be argued that the fact that the study methodology relied on the women traveller's accounts *in situ*, a naturalistic gathering of data, and not on their long term memories added to the dependability and consistency of results. The data were supplemented with reflective data.

The participant demographics display the social, cultural and racial diversity of the representative group. The participants were from a well educated group, the vast majority were Anglo-Saxon in origin and the majority were single and the minority homosexual. I was aware of the fact that the majority of women travellers, from New Zealand statistics as well as academic, backpacker research are from Western cultures, financially able and socially relatively privileged and have freedom of choice. The limitation then is that participants were representative of some women in the global society, those financially and intellectually privileged to travel for pleasure. As discussed earlier in the study the language barrier was a constraint for interviewing the third highest in terms of number of visitors group of women visiting New Zealand, the Japanese, Taiwanese and Chinese to a lesser extent. I therefore was very pleased when I crossed paths with the South American women travellers and the North American and Canadian women whose social cultures do not expect their young people to travel as they do in Europe and therefore there appears to be less of them. This added to the cultural mix of the women, but a further study focusing upon minority group travel may be difficult, a longer process (actually locating these travellers) but worthwhile for example, Asian women. Equally the minority group or niche market of homosexual women travellers, in several destinations around the world would be of great interest.

It has been shown that the gender of the interviewer (the same or different from that of the interviewee) makes a difference to the content of the completed interview (Herod, 1993; Padfield & Procter, 1996). This needs to be acknowledged, in this case it seem very appropriate that the researcher was a 'female insider'. This method of establishing rapport helps develop a trusting relationship and as such the researcher worked on the premise that the participants were telling the truth and were as sincere as she herself was, the idea of (Oakley's, 1981) of believing the interviewee. In this study, it is accepted that the animated descriptions were real and accurate and representative of the women's travel experiences.

Finally, because one's 'biographical, political and relationship become part of the fabric of the field' (Bell, 1993b: 41), a focus on self and positionality has encouraged and allowed feminist researchers to pursue the politics of positionality in their texts (Enslin, 1994). 'There is growing consensus that all data (qualitative and quantitative) are "constructed", in that they are shaped by the categories the researcher uses in order to gather the data and to interpret it, and, in the case of human subjects – by the way the research subject interprets and decides to react to what is being asked. In a large scale survey questionnaire, this "social construction" (so called because of the influence of broad social norms on how we think about data) occurs largely at the moment of questionnaire design, or as in this case the design of the semi-structured interview schedule. Interviews offer opportunities for self-conscious reflection by researchers as well as respondents (Miller, 1996) and how they use their feelings, experiences, and self-analysis to understand and interpret the experiences of others (Griffith and Smith, 1987). I acknowledged that my own experiences, worldviews and gendered opinions have influenced the research process, the initial conception of the study, the structuring and management of the thesis, and the way it has been presented and as (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) claim that it is not possible to be entirely unbiased and objective in any research situation.

### 3.6 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic data was collected by presenting a short questionnaire to the respondent directly before an open qualitative style, semi-structured one-to-one interview. The results of the questionnaire are presented in this section. For further statistical data on the backpacker market (independent traveller included) in New Zealand, see Newland's, (2004) in a comprehensive depth quantitative study. New Zealand Ministry of Tourism gender figures relating to visitors in 2005 showed women backpackers make up 12% of the tourism market, 2% greater than their male counterparts. In New Zealand, 77% of

international backpackers were between 18-35 years of age and 23% were older (MOT, 2006). Older backpackers therefore contributed approximately \$147 million to the economy in 2005.

### 3.6.1 Gender Split

Table 1: New Zealand's Gender statistics 2006 season (MOT, 2006)

Visitor type	Backpacker		Non-backpacker	
	Numbers	Market share	Numbers	Market share
Male	111,000	10%	1,027,000	90%
Female	122,000	12%	931,000	88%

### 3.6.2 Profile of Participants

Table 2: Demographics

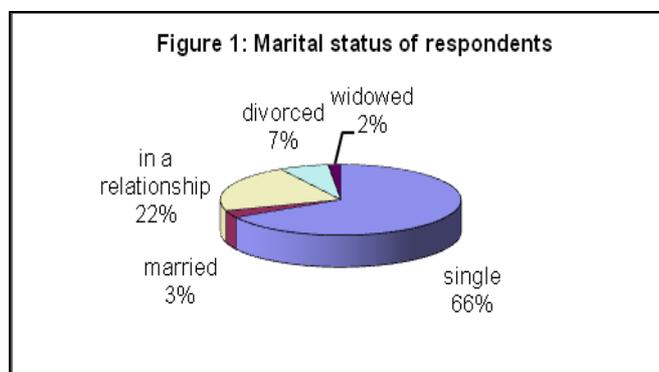
Demographic		Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	18-30	31	51.7
	31-40	11	18.3
	41-50	8	13.3
	51-60	6	10.0
	61-70	4	6.7

Sexuality	Heterosexual	45	75.0
	Homosexual	15	25.0
Nationality	European American	36	60.0
	Australasian	13	11.7
	Asian	7	5.0
	Dual Nationality	3	1.7
		1	1.6
Occupation	Professional	33	55.0
	Student	14	23.3
	Manual	10	16.7
	Self- employed	3	5.0
Total		60	100

### 3.6.3 Age and Sexuality

The respondents were all female and ranged from 19 to 70 years of age, with (70%) being under the age forty and just over (50%) were under 30 years of age. According to tourism providers that were interviewed in New Zealand, the average visitor age over the last few years is increasing and the NZ own statistics show that the age group 25-45 years is now the highest of any. As a part of the study 'women only' accommodations and activity groups were targeted in an attempt to locate respondents from the lesbian community. Fifteen lesbian identified respondents were interviewed which equated to (25%) of the total of sixty women, therefore 45 women identified themselves as heterosexual. However in a study of solo Australian women backpackers (Wilson, 2004: 94) found 'that heterosexual relationships were dominant, but homosexual partnerships were also evident and mentioned'.

### 3.6.4 Marital Status



The marital status data shows that a high number 66% of women were single. However, there were also 22% in a relationship who had chosen to travel. Of those, a number wanted a break from their relationship but were intending to return to it. Only 3% were married.

### 3.6.5 Nationality

Given that New Zealand is a target destination for young travellers seeking adventure tourism and part of a world tourist route for long term travellers, particularly from Europe, the figure of (60%) of the respondents in this study are European. The American representatives, in this study included South Americans: three sisters from Columbia travelling around the world for a year, one Brazilian woman and three Canadians; the remaining six were from North America. One person identified as being dual nationality she was a British woman who has also achieved citizenship in New Zealand. The African continent had no representatives in this study, possibly due to the fact that few African women have the opportunity to travel due to economic and cultural constraints. Statistically, women from third world nations are few and far between, much like the Columbians that I was fortunate enough to meet. I observed many Asian women travellers in New Zealand, after trying on several occasions to converse with them, three times using a small hand held translating machine that the Asian women used as an

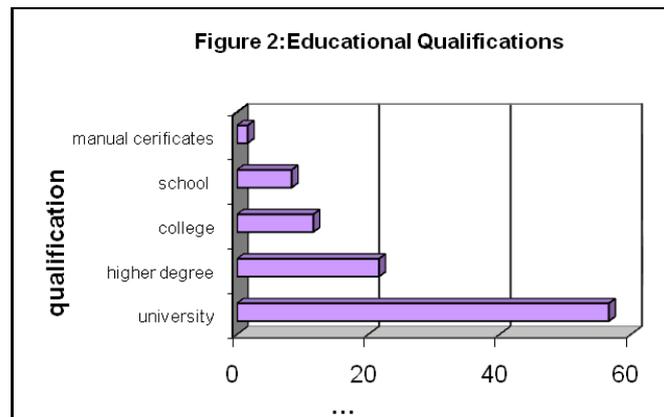
aid to their travels. Disappointingly, although demographic data was collected the resulting conversation/ interview was unsuccessful as it was not possible to communicate on a level competent enough to collect valuable data but it wasn't through the lack of trying. Although 'the global nomad survey included respondents for Hong Kong and Mexico' the Asian 'respondents are universally underrepresented' (Richards, 2004) due to language barriers (see Vance, 2004).

To put this study in some sort of context, according to New Zealand's Ministry of Tourism International Backpacker Market data (2005) results showed the UK provided the largest number of backpackers to New Zealand, making up 23.8% of backpackers in 2005, followed by Australia (18.8%) and the USA (9.1%). This ranking has been consistent since 1977. Other major markets include Germany (7.3%) and Japan (4.8%). From a gender point of view there were 110,000 male backpacker (10%) of the market share, as oppose to (90%) non backpackers, whilst 122,000 women backpackers, 12,000 more women than men, who took (12%) of the market share. This reflects an increase in women backpackers as (Garnham, 1993) pointed out the backpacker of the early 90's was typically male. In this study I observed a greater number of women travellers than men travelling around New Zealand even in the mixed sex hostels. Several hostel owners confirmed this observation.

### 3.6.6 Occupation

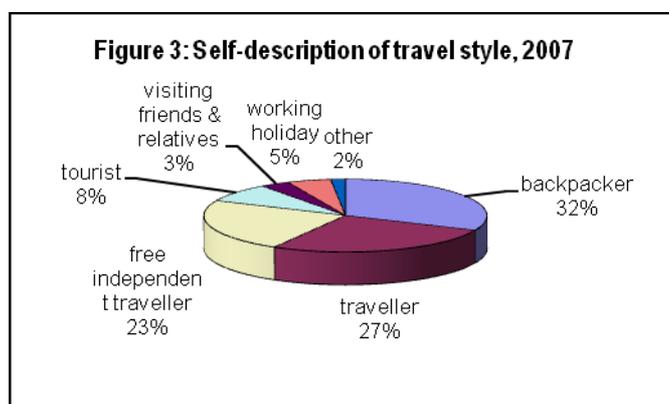
Surprisingly only 23% of the respondents interviewed were students, by far the largest group 55% of women travelling in New Zealand at this time had taken time out from their professional occupations. The remaining 22% percent were manual or self employed. The occupations included; a lawyer, three nurses, a medical assistant, six teachers, two environmentalists, a naturalist guide, an organic farmer, a chef, two youth workers, two solicitors, one occupational therapist, a police officer, a bank manager, three social workers, as well as the students, retirees and unemployed.

### 3.6.7 Educational Qualifications



In total 78% of respondents were educated to university standard and 21% had qualifications above basic degree level. This is consistent with other findings that independent traveller are often highly educated (Richards, 2004.) None of the respondents had any qualifications at all. Of the ten over 50's representatives nine possessed degrees and above, of the fifty under 50's, thirty nine were academically qualified at minimum to degree level.

### 3.6.8 Descriptors of Travel Style



As for travel styles, the diagram above shows the highest percentage described themselves as backpacker (32%), others although most were backpacking preferred to be considered as a traveller (27%) or free independent traveller (23%). Approximately one third of young travellers worldwide perceive of themselves as “backpackers” (Richards, 2005: 101). There were very few who described themselves as tourists (8%). If the traveller and free independent traveller figures are combine to 50% in this study, the figures are comparable to those found in a large study by (Richards and Wilson, 2003: 2) who found that ‘half (50%) identified themselves as travellers, around a third as backpackers (30%) and roughly one fifth (5%) as tourists’. Richards and Wilson (2003: 2) also found that ‘those identifying themselves as ‘backpackers’ tend to by more “experience-seekers” looking for contact with fellow travellers’. Those identifying themselves as ‘travellers’ have more social motives and are more likely to be visiting friends and relatives during their trip. It is those identifying themselves as ‘tourists’ who are more likely to be looking for relaxation’. This study did not distinguish between the self identified groups and their actual behaviours but this would be a possible future study applied to a women’s group as opposed to mixed sex results as above. As can be seen from the chart, a few women interviewed were visiting friends and relatives or were on working holidays. It was young women, below thirty who had working visas for their stay in New Zealand, some were using the WWoofing scheme (Willing Workers on an Organic Farm) to find work and enjoy the New Zealand culture at first hand. The remaining two percent included two women who were on language courses and were using their spare time to travel after their education. None described themselves as flashpackers, even though this word is now in use in academia.

### 3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter contains the following information; discussion concerning the interpretative and qualitative research paradigms and the feminist precepts which informed this research study. The methodologies

implemented for data collection and data analysis and issues regarding the trustworthiness and the limitations of the research. It has been constructed in a detailed, logical manner in an attempt answer the interpretative researcher's major criticism that 'they often fail to explain and justify how and why their qualitative approaches are sound' (Decrop, 1999: 157). The validity and credibility of the research is maintained through my reflexivity, and awareness of assumptions and preconceptions.

60 women were interviewed in total. The interviews took place during the 2006-7 summer season in New Zealand between December and March. They were randomly selected, through this 'purposive' sampling, although a small amount of 'snowballing' occurred unplanned in two ways. In addition, I also interviewed a number of key informants, people professionally involved in the tourism provision and research in New Zealand, hostel and lodge owners, adventure tourism providers and academics. Photographic evidence was collected and serves as a means of backing up the verbal data gathered. All respondents have already been asked to provide by email two or three or more if they wished photographs from their personal collection which symbolised and represented their travel experiences.

The following three results chapters consider different themes and each contains many examples of narrative from the women travellers to support the themes that appeared during the research process. Chapter 4 considers the social aspects of the women traveller's experiences; Chapter 5 charts their adventure experiences and Chapter 6 considers the visual consumption and the women's photographic representations of New Zealand.

## CHAPTER 4: WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS, IDENTITIES AND SPACES OF TRAVEL IN NEW

### ZEALAND

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes a humanistic view emphasising phenomenology i.e. how people see and interpret the world from their own perspectives. Haldrup and Larsen (2003: 42) contend that social gatherings with friends and fellow travellers, as well as meetings with new acquaintances elsewhere on route are as much part and parcel of leisure trips, as is the tourist gaze, and they continue to reflect that photography and tourism are major social practices through which modern people produce storied biographies and memories that provide sense to their selves and their social relations. Today, through the internet and cyberspace, the communication of travel experiences and the maintenance of social networks back home are more quickly and easily achieved. 'Within the classical style of tourism such stories have been told on the back of postcards, occasionally on letters, and most of all, upon arriving home' (Jansson, 2007: 13).

This chapter begins by considering the motivational factors behind the decision making to undertake a travel journey. The motivations and benefits of solo women travellers are focused upon as well as the benefits of travel to women generally. The second section considers how tourism consumption can mobilise a people's self identities and can help them construct new dimensions to their identities. By constructing a transitional bubble or space whilst travelling between their past life and future life the women find space to explore themselves, their own personal needs and desires. Travelling itself and its associated challenges and benefits helps them construct new identities and provide the opportunity for storytelling. The need for, and importance of, social interaction with fellow travellers in particular is considered next. An 'important development seems to have been a desire to seek out other backpackers,

with the aim of exchanging stories and experiences, as well as to hook up with new travelling companions' (Wilson, 2002: 202). Indeed, Hottola (2008: 26) argues that: '[i]ndependent travellers are also often characterized by their search for in-group membership'. These social interactions are a further means of self reflection and identity exploration and construction. The potential mobilisation of lesbian identities through interactions in lesbian space in the travel environment is also explored; how their hidden identities can become, temporarily at least, revealed and performed.

The third and final section of the chapter considers the importance of social space, accommodation space, lesbian only tourism space found in New Zealand and the importance of social networking not just with fellow travellers but with those back home. The internet in particular provides the means to keep in touch, send instant responses after daily activities through emails and blogs and receive feedback instantly from many miles away. The internet also provides a tool for sending the all important photographic evidence which will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Tourism can thus be viewed 'as a form of 'social action' in which individuals construct the meaning of tourism for themselves and may be viewed as a characteristic of modern citizenship associated with people's well being' (Holden, 2005: 59-60).

#### 4.1 WOMEN'S TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND

This section is divided into two : firstly it considers the varied travel motivations of the women in this study and goes on to look more specifically at the motivations of the solo women travellers.

#### 4.1.1 Travel motivations

Motivations for independent travellers are reflected in the decision processes according to Hyde and Lawson (2003:13) who identified 'three characteristics that distinguish the nature of independent travel: the travellers experience an evolving itinerary, the traveller is willing to take risks in selecting vacation elements, and the traveller possesses the desire to experience the unplanned'. Tourism New Zealand views independent travellers 'as those with no travel bookings other than international air tickets, as well as those with additional bookings that were not purchased as a part of a travel retail package'. Backpackers are one sector of this independent market (Hyde and Lawson, 2003). The majority of women interviewed classed themselves as independent traveller or backpackers, their itinerary evolving often due to their spontaneously linking up with other travellers in hostels and most had the attitude that they would 'go with the flow' as it were. Indeed, '[t]here appeared to be intense periods of activity during the trip, which is interspersed with periods of 'hanging out' (Richards and Wilson, 2003: 4). These hanging about periods were the focus my research, and were usually in the evening after the main meal. Motivations for selecting an independent travel journey in the first place back in the home environment, was discussed with the women in the interview situation. Motivational factors were varied and personal although there were themes of commonality. Travellers rarely had one overriding motivation but had specific combinations, usually two or three combined.

A most basic motive to travel is being born with a need to explore the world a need to satisfy a sense of curiosity (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981). This was true of several women participants. The women were travelling to; "achieve an ambition", "to explore the world and to increase my knowledge", "to immerse oneself into another culture", "participate in unusual and different activities", "to learn a language", "to have fun", "to meet new people", "to escape social roles played at home" and to "experience another way of life". These motives, including both push and pull factors are those which provide an impetus to

the individual to take a trip (Dann, 1977). Motivation to travel is not a simplistic concept but involves the individual in an often complex set of circumstances and considerations. As the following quotes suggest there are frequently combinations of motives or factors blending together to provide the trigger to make travel a reality:

Sandra aged 29 from Austria:

The main motivation was the travel itself. Seeing the landscape, the animals, volcanoes, glacier, to know how the people that lives so far away is. Also, to have a break from everyday life and to rest..

Karin aged 39 from Switzerland:

To see the world, places, cultural and geographical sites of importance. To expand my personal experience and education. To experience wilderness and to get away from it all. Really I suppose to put life back in perspective and get to know myself better...

Lina-Maria aged 23 from Columbia:

when I was younger, like five years ago I saw the backpackers with these rucksacks, huge rucksacks and they go everywhere and see the world so I wanted to become one of them..

A basic desire to explore the world is now a reality, a distinct possibility for some women due to the social changes over the past hundred years, as described in the contextual review Chapter 2, on women's travel. The following quote stresses that possibility:

Susan aged 37 from England:

A desire to see the world, experience new cultures, fulfil dreams and have as many positive experiences as possible (and escape from banality that would drive me insane)! Also just because I can. I am free, financially independent and my family supports me with my decisions.

One accommodation provider had observed over many years of contact with women visitors to New Zealand. She (Rose aged 56 from New Zealand), commented that she believed there were:

...three distinct groups of women travelling, the young gap year mainly from Europe- now becoming the thing to do much like our OE (Overseas Experience). Second group are in their late 20's – early 30's these are the women who are wanting to self discover. They are often removing themselves from a difficult relationship, a break-up, a career change or some other personal trigger. Then there's the third group those with disposable income 40-70 year olds who want to discover other cultures, scenery and enjoy travelling to gain knowledge and experience.

I found this a valid statement the older women were very grateful for the opportunity to travel, an opportunity that had evolved during their lifetime. They referred to their parent's generation and when they were children when families were confined to a particular geographical locality with income used on a day to day basis to survive and with little opportunity to travel anywhere. Travel to them was a dream that they felt would never have been possible in their lifetime and because of this they were very appreciative of having this once in a lifetime opportunity to travel and were very enthusiastic to explore and to discover. For the mid-life age group travel provided an opportunity to discover themselves and the world around them whilst the younger generation were selecting travel in their mobile and globally communicative world to develop themselves, their travel career and enhance cultural exchange.

Many of the mid-life women interviewed were at a crossroads in their lives, a transitional period which appeared to be a trigger for the motive to travel. As Riley (1988: 325) has stated, '[m]any backpackers are at a crossroads in their life: recently graduated, married or divorced, between jobs; such explanations are frequent when asked why they travel'. According to Goossen's (2000: 301) 'tourists are pushed by their emotional needs and pulled by the emotional benefits'. Other authors have found that escaping the responsibilities of everyday life either family or career in the desire to travel (Loker, 1993; Loker-Murphy, 1996). Unhappiness in employment and personal relationships, or a natural

breaking point in their lives between university and employment, were common emotional factors in the women's responses. In this study the women who were travelling tended to be in a state of transition or liminality in their lives and demonstrated a need to find personal space. They wanted to create what they referred to as **me time** in relatively relaxing, peaceful and safe surroundings (Myers and Hannam, 2008). For many of the women interviewed, the decision to start travelling was thus closely linked to a transitional period in their lives.

All life spans involve significant transition, such as from work to retirement, where identity has to be renegotiated, new autobiographies have to be constructed, and new trajectories have to be set. Desforges (2000: 932).

Such liminal times are referred to as 'fateful moments' by Giddens (1991: 112-114). Desforges explains Giddens' 'fateful moments' as 'significant point of transition in people's lives where reflexivity is heightened because decisions have to be made about the self and self-actualisation that will have repercussions for self-identity and lifestyle for a considerable number of years ahead'. (Desforges, 2000: 932). Hence, escaping from social/ interpersonal situations back at home and searching for, or creating, actual time to think without the distractions of the everyday was an important element in their stories:

Sabin aged 29 from Germany:

I was like really stressed out, I, I had a lot of trouble at home and a broken heart and, yeah, what I expected was like find myself a little bit and get peace and quiet again and figure out what I'm gonna do, ha, ha.

Yvonne aged 37 from Holland:

I'm sort of in a mid-life crisis and what I need now it's just peace, quiet and beautiful, natural surroundings, it's just I hope I get some time to think and ,em, be a bit closer to me instead of always thinking of others.

Escaping the roles in the home environment of, daughter, granddaughter, aunty, mother, friend, or colleague, allowed a greater focus upon 'self', self exploration and hence personal development. These findings are true of women in general (see Myers and Hannam, 2008; Wilson and Little, 2005; Jordan and Gibson, 2005):

Simone aged 27 from Germany:

I felt I should be going, I wanted to, just to find the next stage in my life really and I felt like I needed to do a drastic change of environment and change of lifestyle to explore or search for the next stage of my life really.

Andrea aged 42 from Germany:

Social structures at home constrain your movement and behaviour- the structures are not there when you are travelling –you have the freedom

The pull factors or destination attributes according to Dann (1977) are external motivational factors given by the women as to why New Zealand was chosen as a destination such as pictures shown by other travellers or novels read about New Zealand:

Farah aged 27 from the United States:

a couple of girlfriends of mine came here for a couple months, about four years ago and they were showing me pictures and telling me stories and that's pretty much part of the beginning of all this so, here I am..

Anna aged 29 from Germany:

Mmm, I always wanted to go to New Zealand erm since, I think, I was nine or ten years old I was, I read a book which called The Flight of the Albatross and, erm that's, yeah since that time I wanted to see this country...

Word of mouth recommendations and New Zealand's image as portrayed in a variety of media were thus important pull factors in this study. New Zealand provides a relatively safe environment to explore.

Indeed, the use of the words 'beautiful', 'peaceful', 'safe' and 'freedom' were commonly used by the women with relation to their needs and desires. New Zealand was perceived as a destination which provided for those needs and desires. Women only backpacker accommodation and a network of women providing leisure opportunities, coupled with New Zealand's perceived image of being gay friendly also attracted lesbian women to come to New Zealand. This provision and its implications are discussed later in a section entitled lesbian space. Next I consider the phenomenon of solo woman travellers, discussing the motivations, benefits and problems including safety associated with this form of travel.

#### 4.1.2 Solo women travellers

Contemporary women travellers choose to travel alone or solo, and in so doing encounter the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach to travel. They may remain solo for the entirety of the journey or they may link or team up with other travellers on a temporary short term basis. Women do team up for a short while, with other individuals they meet along the way, for days or weeks, then splitting off on their own journey again, ready to make new acquaintances in other destinations and hostels (Riley, 1988). Solo travellers had a preference for a flexible itinerary and reject the idea of travelling permanently with another backpacker who has different needs, timetable constraints and financial restrictions. McArthur (1999) states that solo women travellers were economic travellers staying predominantly in low priced hostels and eating local food while they were travelling alone. The following quote sums up the dilemma that women have about whether to travel solo:

Laura aged 27 from England:

I'm less nervous and less anguished, with someone, but I'm not so free, I have to do with the preferences and the feelings of another person, sometimes his rhythm of life is not mine, and we have to compose. I learn less, and I'm also less opened to the environment, because of the presence of someone else.

Retaining a flexible approach gives them the option to break free and to be alone or share an experience with others if they wish, in their view 'having the best of both worlds'. Practically, solo travel involves planning, decision making, budgeting, overcoming obstacles and a determination to make it work. On a personal level the experience can improve self esteem and self belief, and assist in self discovery and self development (Elsrud, 1998; Gibson and Jordan, 1998b). Hence, many solo women choose to travel alone because it allows their senses to be alerted to the fact that they are the one responsible, they have to manage any situation that develops, and they're in charge of their own destiny with no immediate backup. Such a psychological position can have positive effects; it can boost confidence, self belief and self reliance, a record of proof of your own ability. Jordan and Gibson (2005:197) found 'solo travel a source of empowerment and an important facet in their lives'. In an earlier study Gibson and Jordan (1998) in their comparative study of American and British solo female travellers, found that safety and security are social constraints for female travellers but overcome such challenge they increased in confidence, gained a sense of freedom and empowerment. It can also be quite challenging and can present situations that were not anticipated and hence be of self-educational value:

Liz aged 61 from Canada:

**Travelling alone strengthens the trust in yourself as well as a boost to your self- confidence and self esteem, a much deeper inner learning.**

Elaine aged 26 from England:

**Travel helps you to trust your own instincts and to be open with people.**

The women in this study also talked about the sense of freedom they gained from social expectations and constraints constructed around them at home. When considering good and bad holiday experiences Small (2002: 29) found that 'a good holiday experience meant a sense of freedom from

social responsibilities and an escape from normal routine' and 'holidays in which they had choices of what to do, spontaneity, only themselves to please and time for themselves'. She concluded that 'women need to recapture some of the freedom they experienced as girls' (2002: 37). Although Small's work did not relate to the backpacker fraternity or long haul holidays or solo experiences but mainly women's family holidays, the findings very much describe the factors associated with the solo travellers desires that I found:

Sarah aged 26 from England:

Your outside your daily frame, if you take someone with you then you can't escape your daily frame because they create a link the reference back home

Corrine aged 26 from Switzerland:

It removes you from peer pressure and you are therefore much more your own person without external influences. Travelling with friends can be inhibiting because they make links back to home life.

Many women felt that with this new found freedom they were more open and honest about themselves with strangers and being alone made them more likely to make a deliberate attempt to converse with someone new, increasing the chances of forming a new friendship. Generally the women commented on the fact that they met so many more people whilst travelling alone than you do with a friend or partner. They were free to move about and chose where to go and what to do and when to do it, no-one else was making decisions for them. 'Feelings of freedom, spontaneity, and strength, among others were often cited as reasons why they continue to enjoy solo travel' (Jordan and Gibson, 2005: 294). Hence, meeting other travellers and building close friendships was an important motivation to some of the women in order to achieve a new sense of belonging:

Rebecca aged 26 from Australia:

I think for women travelling on their own they often find people when they're away, other people to travel with, like I found Carol, we have been really good company for one another...

Farah aged 27 from the United States:

When I travel alone I sometimes go to bars, movies, and shows alone, which I don't usually do while at home. I've met some great people at bars, usually other solo travellers. Travelling makes people intimate very quickly, you can get together for a while to share experiences and talk about yourself and what you have done. You feel really good making new friends, it makes you feel popular.

Davidson (1996) whilst investigating the role of social relationships in determining good and bad holiday experiences, found an individual can develop one or more aspects of themselves by choosing their holiday companions. In this case, solo travellers interacting with fellow unknown travellers allowed greater freedom in exploring aspects of the self which may be hidden or in the background in their home environment:

Cacey aged 23 from England:

Realisation when travelling alone that the influence of others is greater than I thought, how I adapt to the needs and wants of others back at home whereas travelling allows me to be me.

Paula aged 32 from England:

You develop a sense of belonging to other travellers, I suppose your identifying with them as fellow travellers, a solo traveller's club almost yeah, where you can discuss your background and aims in life and just well personal things

Many women interviewed noted that the people they met along their journey were what made it special and worthwhile. However, interaction through modern means of communication by emailing and texting were also important lifelines for solo travellers enabling them to share their solo experiences with friends and family, lessening the potential loneliness and potential isolation of the lone travel.

A study of older single female holidaymakers by Stone and Nicol (1998: 15) highlighted 'the importance of social interaction and enhanced self-esteem as an integral part of the holiday experience'. They go on to point out that this could be achieved by the provision of special floors, rooms or areas dedicated

to the female holiday maker and 'the provision of discretely positioned tables for lone diners which allow for a forum of interaction'. The first idea was popular with women backpackers and is discussed further below. The second recommendation is also of importance to the independent women traveller if she wished to leave the hostel dining facilities to eat in a café or restaurant. In this study, the women pointed out the disadvantage of travelling alone was that sometimes there was no one present to share a special moment, to verbalise the shared experience or even to have a meal with. Small (2002: 29) found that travelling with others was important as it meant the 'women had someone with whom to discuss and share experiences'. McArthur (1999) has pointed out that there were moments in solo trips where having company to share an experience would have been of great satisfaction to the women. Indeed, '[d]ining alone, particularly in the evening, was the most problematic solo holiday activity consistently identified by the women' (Jordan and Gibson, 2005: 2000).

Claudia aged 27 from Australia:

When I'm travelling with a friend or, actually, with my boyfriend, the major advantage is to share. We can share your impressions, your feelings. You always have someone to share a meal. I really don't like to eat alone when travelling – but it often happens when you're travelling solo.

Heather aged 60 from Canada:

One of the hardest things is sitting having a meal on your own, you feel so conspicuous like people are staring at you wondering if you have no friends. Cooking and eating in the hostel doesn't often lead to you sitting alone at night having a meal. If you time it right, you know at the busiest time there are always plenty of people to join up with to eat. If you go out you'll more than likely end up sitting on your own which is not ideal. Anyway it's always cheaper to eat in isn't it?

Furthermore, Jordan and Gibson (2005:201) found that 'often the dining room was identified as sexualized "couples space" and thus difficult to relax in when alone'. Some women said that if they went to a café or restaurant one method of avoiding the conspicuous stare was to read a book or magazine, or play a game on a mobile device or look at digital photographs, providing a physical barrier as well as a point of focus.

A shift of women's focus and concentration from guarding against the male gaze and threat ultimately allowed a greater sense of freedom and reduced stress enabling women to be able to move from place to place, to experience the outdoor environment of New Zealand and to actively seek pleasurable experiences without having to concentrate too much on personal safety issues. They can become empowered by their newly found freedom and can then participate and make positive personal gains from participating in the many outdoor activities New Zealand has to offer. Solo women travellers in particular were grateful to escape the pressures of travel in South Asia, a destination on the backpacker route often visited before arriving in Australia and New Zealand, as they felt they could relax and have time to rest, enjoy and recharge their batteries ready for another challenging culture. If women feel safe then they are more relaxed and then being more relaxed they can concentrate upon enjoying themselves and their leisure pursuits. This section has considered the motivations of the solo women traveller, the following section considers women's identities in relation to their travel experiences in New Zealand in more depth.

#### **4.2 WOMEN'S IDENTITIES WHILE TRAVELLING IN NEW ZEALAND**

Identity issues were conceptualised in Chapter 2 where it was noted that 'The emerging direction of contemporary social theory is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the attention it lavishes upon the nature of the self, self-identity, and individual subjectivities' (Elliott, 2006: 8). This section explores women's identity issues under five subheadings. The first section considers the construction of women's self-identities and the role of tourism in this through their travel experiences in New Zealand. The second section discusses travel benefits to women's identities through entering a transitional travel zone, a place where reassessment of identity and future directions can be considered.. The third section investigates social interactions and identity development. The fourth section investigates hidden identities in terms of

lesbian women who often hide their identity but see travel as a means of mobilising their identities. The fifth and final section examines women's story telling and self-reflection about their journeys.

#### 4.2.1 Self Identity

As discussed in the earlier contextual chapters, tourism consumption can mobilise a person's self identity and can help them construct new identities. 'Self identity is understood as our own sense of ourselves as persons and social identity is categorisations of us by others' (Bryne, 2003: 443). At the beginning of their interviews the women were asked to how they describe themselves both from a personal point of view and from a travelling perspective. From an identity point of view the women generally appeared to be using travel and travel experiences to free themselves from social pressures constraining their development back in the home environment. Freedom and confidences gained through their journeys experiences; through meeting other like-minded travellers; through activities they chose to undertake and through reflecting upon their own cultures and roles by making comparisons to other destinations allowed them to benefit on a personal level. Dimanche and Samdahl (1994: 125) suggest 'that the need for identity affirmation at a personal level (needs for self-expression), and affirmation of social identity (needs for conspicuous consumption) both influence the choice of leisure activities'. As Cederholm (1994: 4) writes, 'there is a longing for personal authenticity; to find the real me'.

Travelling has emerged as an important informal qualification with the passport acting, so to speak, as professional certification; a record of achievement and experience' and 'the relative popularity of new and far-distant destinations lies in the accumulation of cultural capital or the ability to demonstrate taste (Bourdieu, 1984) where long-haul tourism is used to construct the identities of new class fractions among the middle class of the first world (Munt 1994: 112).

Munt maintains that if the decision to go away is about investing in tourism for self-identity, then coming back home again should be one way of reaping the rewards of the experience. The women were asked

to provide textual and photographic evidence on returning home, a few weeks after their travel experience, reflecting on their journey and the potential gains they made. These findings are discussed at the end of this chapter.

#### 4.2.2 Transitional travel zones

Long term travel provides 'a neutral, transition zone sandwiched between voluntary or imposed endings and new beginnings' White and White (2004: 2000). The younger participants in their early 20's were leaving their home environment for the first time and are beginning to carve their own identity from that of being, that of a student and a daughter for instance. For young, long term budget traveller's, travel can function as a rite of passage (Cohen, 1973; Graburn, 1983; Riley, 1988; Vogt, 1976). Some of these young women have just completed a university course and take time out to travel before they either settle down or decide upon a career pathway, others were dissatisfied with their employment and needed to reassess their life pathway or use travel as an excuse to postpone adult responsibilities.

Heather aged 23 from the United States:

When you first get away from your parents, it's the freedom; you're a different person, not behaving like someone else expects you to. No one knows you, so you can have your own space to be yourself, it's great.

Andrea aged 42 from Germany:

Meeting like-minded people gives you the opportunity to be yourself, they know nothing of your personal baggage nor you theirs therefore you are at the same starting point, to be yourself completely. They can take you or leave you; there are no shutters up like there are at home.

A new found freedom through escape from the mundane or routine, gave the women the opportunity to, be themselves, reassess their lives, and perhaps search for a new meaning to their lives. For the mid-life age group some women were in a transition period from being depended upon by children,

partner and identified with domestic duties, to a new freedom of putting their own needs as a woman first (Myers and Hannam, 2008) and finding what some of them called 'me time':

Sandra aged 29 from Austria:

Travel allows my self-development, the freedom to be who you want to be

By travelling I am finding the confidence to be myself the person that I know I am.

Ann aged 61 from Canada

Travel for women means leaving the familiar domain of home and a comfortable environment to gain freedom to express yourself, oh and from the many constraints. It gives your self the chance to be who you are and able to respond to others in that manner.

The women from this age group had previously, or still were, identifying themselves as wives, mother, housewives and carers. But through the discussion the women began to realise they were entering a new phase of their lives and their need to develop new identities. Until the children are older the overwhelming consensus was that the woman's needs and wants were put 'on hold' for the sake of the children and the husband. Only when the children have flown the nest is the woman able to relax and enjoy a holiday, looking for pleasure and experiences to suit her personal needs (Myers and Hannam, 2008). Previous social identities, of mothers, wives and domestic workers had placed restrictions on their potential travel movements in the past, but now they were able to develop a new sense of self and self-worth ready to move into the future. The women in this study displayed enormous enthusiasm to continue to travel and gain all the associated benefits:

Diana aged 63 from England:

Women haven't changed physically or mentally. I think in the past women will have been interested in travelling the world but they had no opportunity. I don't think women were on this earth just to be mothers and housewives, I think they've always wanted to do other things, it's just society has kept them in a place where they didn't think they could do. When you are a child, a young adult, you see it in films, you read stories, you learn about the world in geography, but its always been at arms length. We never thought in our lifetime we would

achieve so much. Stories about the world have been around us all the time but our generation have never had the freedom to travel. Together all these things motivate you, and give you the incentive to explore and that's what i'm doing now and I feel like a new person already...

Diana begins to feel like a new person because of her travel opportunities and experiences, which for her generation and lifetime are due to dramatic social change in the Western world. For the older women the transition from being a wife and mother to being free and financially stable to pursue their own interests was important. Travelling provided a new set of experiences that contrasted with those at home in the everyday domestic routine. Some older participants also talked about travel as a challenge which extended them both physically, intellectually and emotionally, as one astute traveller pointed out:

Liz aged 51 from Australia:

**With regard to travelling and learning, it's not where you are but who you are- it takes a long time to realise that..**

These older retired women provided the most passionate and enthusiastic interviewees about their previous and future travel experiences. An air of confidence was apparent within this group, of strong meaning and direction of their lives in the future through their travel which usually involved more travel. Their stories contained descriptions of how they have been touched both physically and emotionally and stimulated by forging close friendships intensified through the shared meanings and experiences of travel. Overall, the need to self assess and reassess their identities was an important benefit of taking time out in a liminal space by travelling.

#### 4.2.3 Social Interactions and Identity Development

Next I consider the importance of social interactions with fellow travellers. As Elliott suggests in chapter 2, when conceptualising identity, 'creative engagement with others and the wider world; language and communication are pivotal to the fabrication of personal identity and the self' Elliott (2006: 31). The presence of other travellers was of prime importance and social interaction of major significance, as a

way of cultural exchange, forging new friendships and self-learning through feedback from others. Murphy (2001) has contended that social interaction was a prime motive for travel and that it constituted a central experiential attribute to the trip and as Byrne (2003: 444) points out 'identity is composed in social, communicative interactions with others'. Research from leisure studies, 'emphasises the importance of female kin and friendship networks to women's well being, demonstrating the beneficial effects of networks' (Green, 1998: 176). According to Richards and Wilson (2003: 18), meanwhile, '[b]ackpacker enclaves and backpacker accommodation have lead to 'a greater concentration of travellers in close proximity and hence there are more like-minded travellers to associate with and with whom to exchange information and stories'. Hence, in my study the respondents emphasised the importance of interactions thus:

Karin aged 39 from Switzerland:

You meet a small number of people that you immediately 'click' with and with these people you share a lot more and give you the opportunity to be open and genuine, really just to be yourself. You relish such a meeting when it happens; it gives you a real buzz meeting others who share similar views, ideas and ideals. This is when you feel travelling is so worthwhile'.

On the other hand some of the women in this study also pointed out that they were more likely to encounter more people than in normal life who were from different backgrounds, nationalities, socio-economic groups and that this was also another dimension to learning:

Ros aged 64 from Scotland:

In this travel environment women interact in a manner that is unlikely to be usual and they find themselves interacting with people whose paths they would not cross under normal circumstances...

Liz aged 58 from England:

You meet people who give you advice, people from other walks of life. You meet people that you wouldn't normally pass the time of day with and therefore gain a greater perspective of a more diverse group of people to interact with

Social camaraderie and making new friends was also an important element and of great benefit in the

overall enjoyment of a woman's stay at any particular accommodation establishment:

Cacey aged 23 from England:

you need people and, er, that's the issue thing about hostels, you meet a lot of people and, erm, you can choose if you, you want to spend time with people or not but, yeah, they are, otherwise it's gonna be very lonely I think, yeah

The decision to be sociable can lead to a greater sense of community, being part of the travelling community, as opposed to the potential loneliness of solo travel for example. Many women wanted to socialise in the common room areas of the hostels and become accepted as a fellow traveller with tales to tell. Another major advantage of being sociable is that you have a much greater opportunity to develop long term friendships:

Helen aged 30 from England:

One benefit to me is meeting other travellers and making long-term friendships yeah, I suppose it easy now to keep in touch with people and build on your friendship because of the internet

Heather aged 60 from Canada:

for myself, most of my travel has been on my own, and I have met a lot of people, many more than if I travel with someone ehm that I considered real friends though, and I still kept in touch with quite a few.

A further important element of independent travel and the close proximity of other travellers is that a relationship or bond can develop very quickly, and personal information is freely given to other individuals because of the lack of social barriers and expectations.

Farah aged 27 from The United States:

I mean it's, it's such an intense relationship the travel relationship because you meet someone, you have no idea who they are, they're from another part of the world and you're just with them for 24hrs a day and, you know, within three days you know more about these people than if you had known them in a normal setting for three months, you know if you're with the person morning noon and night for three days, you know if they're a good person, you know if you're gonna be friends for a long time, you know what they do, you know what they like, you know what they wanna do.. The benefits of this you know are that you can have really deep and

meaningful conversations and as you do you learn more about yourself as well as them and of course another part of the world.

This study shows similarities to Noy's (2004: 84) findings of young backpackers that they 'tell of their new place in life in positive terms - they are wiser, more knowledgeable, more socially and emotionally apt etc., than they were prior to the journey'. The main emphasis being that 'all descriptions refer exclusively to positive and beneficial changes' (Noy, 2004: 90). Indeed, the women interviewed only talked about positive benefits.

#### 4.2.4 Story-telling and self reflection

Story-telling is an important method of gaining a sense of the self according to Giddens (1991) who goes on to point out that there are two sets of narrative, that which is internal (i.e. kept to oneself) and an external representation of experiences to others. Hence, '[a]nother important development seems to have been a desire to seek out other backpackers, with the aim of exchanging stories and experiences, as well as to hook up with new travelling companions' (Wilson, 2002: 202). Whilst travelling the women tell stories about themselves and their experiences to other travellers and individuals they meet en route as well as stories they post on the internet and on arrival back home to family and friends:

Karin aged 26 from the United States:

**Its fun to tell your stories to new people and get feedback and you relive the excitement, you're constantly reassessing yourself and when you get a good reaction you get positive reinforcement**

A combination of the results of this conversational and narrative exchange can result in a reformed and reassessed picture of the self. Desforges (2000: 931-2) states that '[i]t is only through the production of an ongoing story about the self that the individual can provide herself or himself with a sense of continuity in their identity'. Noy (2004: 79) goes on to say that what lies at the core of the backpackers

stories, though often covert is these youths' selves and identities, rather than the exciting activities and accomplishments which constitute the overt topic of narration. Hence,

Ros aged 64 from Scotland:

Women enjoy sharing their life stories, listening to others to gain acceptance and constructing a place for themselves.

As was noted in Chapter 2, people constantly produce and reproduce 'life stories on the basis of memories, interpreting the past through the lens of social information, and using this information to formulate present and future life stories' Lawler (2008: 1). 'The quality of talk is perceived as best within female groups in private domestic space' Green (1998: 179). In this travel context, the women's dormitory and other common places in hostels are ideal place for such talk to be generated. The women commented on this fact that 'having fun', 'a laugh', 'telling jokes' and 'a carry on' were important elements of their interactions, particularly with other women. 'The shared intimacy of women's talk and the sense of connection which it engenders, construct a 'collaborative tool' for exploring the world' (Coates, 1996: 71). Laughter is also beneficial in releasing tension and relaxing the body and mind. Francis (1994) argues that positive sentiments are generated through humor and laughter, which reduces threats and bonds group insiders together:

Megan aged 22 from the United States:

Yeah we talk differently than with guys, I don't know, we can't joke around as much or get more comfortable feeling around them as quickly, but er, with girls er, we just ah stayed in a room with two Scottish women last night and we had great conversation, I don't know, we were just talking about whatever and it was really fun...

Vera aged 40 from Germany:

last night around the fire (camp fire) erm, it was just great, I mean I had a great time it was so great with all the songs and in between everybody was, er, talking and laughing, from different cultures and having fun and just having a lovely time and, erm, very warm atmosphere, really relaxing...

The Scottish woman in the first quote were talking about their women only dormitory location, how they laughed and shared stories and bonded with the others in their room. Similarly, the setting around a campfire, coupled with 'laughter and fun' lead to positive benefits of relaxation and warmth. Another benefit was that of developing a greater understanding of their own and other cultures through interactions and therefore a greater appreciation of your own country and your own predicament. Such interaction was a learning experience which particularly the younger women felt enabled them to be more understanding, more tolerant, more patient when dealing with people with other cultural backgrounds and beliefs:

Sarah aged 26 from England:

[it] makes you aware of, you know, the little corner you occupy in the world our, our living trading practices in the country and all of that influence other parts of the world so I think, you know, from that just develops such a sense of justice and kind of responsibility for being a useful citizen and, you know, and, so the kind of the glitziness of, erm, materialistic society maybe is not that important..

Kate aged 23 from England:

It just makes you think differently, it makes you give you a bigger perspective and it makes you appreciate, in a way as well it makes you appreciate your home country. I think erm, the biggest sense of identity, like you, you learn more about who you are you know, when, when you've done a lot of travelling you tend to enjoy the company of other people who've done a lot of travelling and it's, because there's, I think there's a bit of a spark about people that travel and have got a bigger world, ha, ha

Moreover, many women, both younger and older, felt it improved their chances of being a 'better world citizen', through having firsthand experience and an understanding of other cultures and other nationalities:

Clemence aged 22 from France:and I bought a t-shirt which isn't a very good fit or anything but it's got a lovely array of people all over it in different colours and that, and the text is simply 'The Art of Human Being' that, I bought it partly coz I thought yes that's what life's about the art of learning to be human and if you travel with any luck you'll widen your range somehow or your perception and, and be never able to forget, erm

Anne aged 55 from England:

I think, one of the benefits of travel should be, er, and I know this sounds really corny and naf but, kind of like to unite people throughout the world really, because once you go and meet people in different countries and talk to them and realise that everybody's just the same really, erm, you begin to break down some of the prejudices and the xenophobia that might be er, around..

Ruth aged 45 from England:

Increase in tolerance of others, better listener, my views are changing I am not so black and white anymore. I am becoming more aware of other people and their actions. I am more reflective, tougher but also more laid back.

Due to social interactions with other travellers and hosts from diverse cultural backgrounds, the women talked in terms of 'a newly acquired openness, tolerance and patience' (Noy, 2004:90). Social interaction with other travellers leading to leading to acquisition of knowledge, cultural knowledge, greater tolerance of other nationalities. Additionally, social interactions can lead to new friendships and a platform for personal feedback and thus self assessment and it was felt that the chances of being an better world citizen could result.

#### 4.2.5 Hidden Identities

Sexuality is one of our key identity characteristics and as such can impact on tourism experiences. To date little research has considered lesbian identity and tourism experiences and expectations. 'Instead tourism research often suggests that holiday experiences are unfettered by social norms' (Jordan, 1998: 72). Social norms can govern both public and private behaviour. This study found that lesbian identities are either; totally revealed, totally hidden or partially hidden in the home environments as a way of negotiating the dominant heterosexually constructed environment. 'Holidays offer the chance of escape from a world in which participants' sexuality is ridiculed or kept hidden' (Pritchard et al., 2000: 275). Because identities can be constrained at home by the threat of homophobia, holidays are often

seen as the opportunity to come out of hiding and express a lesbian identity, in another place or space, where anonymity can provide support and confidence. 'It is still the case that homosexuals are only allowed to be gay in specific places and spaces' (Bristow, 1989: 74) largely because of the heterosexual nature of public spaces however, things are slowly changing but only in specific places and spaces.

Many of the lesbian women interviewed talked of hiding their identity back at home, either fully or were 'out' to only a selected few close individuals and were less likely to be 'out' in their work environment. The social pressures of the heterosexual world on homosexual women often leads to a world of constraints and negotiations, not normally encountered by heterosexual women. The fear of rejection and potential alienation, leads to careful planning of life in general, including leisure and particularly the holiday situation. With regard to destination choice, Pritchard et al (2000: 275) found that whilst gay men would discuss features such as "cultural settings, monuments, and architectural buildings' as influential, 'lesbians were more likely to mention the need for acceptance'.

Many gay women interviewed did not feel they were well integrated into their permanent places of residence their home societies, in fact many marginalised themselves, kept a low profile for fear of homophobic responses and some were not 'out' at all. This predicament can lead to a lack of a sense of community due to their sexuality and can lead to a small friendship group in the home environment. The absence of a strong sense of community and friendship networks led some to seek lesbian communities or accommodations in New Zealand whilst travelling so that they could become part of a lesbian community, be accepted for who they were even though it was only on a temporary basis. The lesbian women interviewed expressed their journeys and experiences as **escapes** relative to the societal expectations and perceptions in their home environments. They wanted to escape from the

roles they played at home and have the freedom from socially expected behaviours to examine their own social and sexual identities (Myers, 2010):

Andrea aged 46 from Germany:

...at home I know everybody in the countryside so I, I can't be myself, only in my house. In this country at the other side of the world, they tolerate lesbians more than in Germany and it makes you feel free, much more free to kiss her and hold her hand in the outside.

Sabine aged 29 from Germany:

...it's better in New Zealand to be gay I think than in Germany, I get more people, erm, yeah, being rude to me because of my butch looks of being gay at home, it's better here there more accepting of who I am.

Pritchard et al (2000: 274) found that the majority of their lesbian and gay respondents needed to 'escape for a sense of belonging and safety and the opportunity "to be oneself" were more often directly linked to their sexuality'. Similarly, in this study and unlike the heterosexual women interviewed, the need to express their sexual identity as well as explore their identity in general was of great importance. Anonymity seemed to empower individuals and gave them freedom to perform their personal desires without judgement:

Vera aged 40 from Germany:

Nobody knows you here so you can do, erm, weird or strange things, ha, ha, and no-one will think oh what's she doing? yeah anything can happen, the worlds like open now and, you're not confined in it, like in a box, you can be whoever you want to be actually and, erm, you get more erm, I don't know, you do the things you want to do instead of things people want you to do

This perhaps generates an even stronger desire to carefully select a holiday destination or environment that will allow at least some 'relative escape' from these constraints. The significance of a defined lesbian space should not be underestimated. For example, with reference to the only commercial women's space in Manchester's Gay Village, 'the café **Vanilla** provides a place to drink and escape the

pressures in the rest of the village but it is developing into a centre through which sports, holidays, excursions and nights out are arranged. These extended support functions seem to emanate from the isolation of lesbians in society as a whole' (Pritchard et al., 2007: 284). In New Zealand the lesbian owned café at Waipu village provides a similar service in this lesbian community and is a place where lodge visitors are taken to so that they too can feel part of their wider lesbian community. From the tourism provider's point of view:

Rose aged 58 from New Zealand:

Oh, a place where they can feel safe to be themselves and be in a friendly environment, both the village and in our community up here. Where they can be part of a bigger lesbian community. They're more able to show their affection just because of the construction of the environment erm, they don't have anyone watching them, you know, defining how they can be.

From a traveller or guest's point of view:

Anne aged 55 from England:

the café is a great meeting place, just seeing other New Zealand lesbians out shopping and calling into the café for their daily socializing was lovely to see, they were welcoming to me as an overseas visitor, I felt part of the community something you don't experience at home, very special. You looked forward to going again to meet more lesbians and like they just accepted you as a fellow lesbian. We went for a coffee nearly every day.

As with this study Pritchard et al (2000: 276) pointed out that 'it was more important for lesbians to "feel safe and made to feel welcome" and to avoid situations where straight people would react negatively'. By escaping socio-cultural norms, a freedom is gained which can result in a sense of empowerment. A sense of inclusion as oppose to exclusion can be experienced.

In conclusion to this identity section, it can be said that, identity formation is fluid, an ongoing process of redefining oneself and under constant review during life and in this case during an adventurous journey in New Zealand. One's personal identity is a conglomeration of many aspect and dimensions and is

unique to the individual, the extent to which travel experiences and interactions assist in developing an individual's identity varies considerably. 'Travel provides a new form of identity...in that she is now able to define herself according to individual experiences of the world rather than her position in the institution of the family' (Desforges, 2000: 935). The next section investigates the importance of social space and interactions for female travellers in New Zealand.

#### 4.3 WOMEN TRAVELLER'S SOCIAL SPACES

The final section of this chapter considers the importance social space for women's interactions in New Zealand. It is divided into three sections, firstly travel space, concentrating upon backpacker accommodation where female travellers interact with other travellers on a daily basis, secondly a specific look at lesbian accommodation and space and finally the role of the increasing importance of internet space or cyberspace in the lives of female travellers in New Zealand.

##### 4.3.1 Backpacker Travel Spaces

One of the main places traveller's socialise is in the accommodation spaces. Backpacker accommodation was the predominant choice for the women travellers, although some stayed at women backpackers and women only lodges, camp grounds and one in a camper vans. Some backpacker hostels are women only, others provide women only rooms or women only floors as well as the usual mixed dormitories. Some of the more modern establishments provide single or double rooms and small dormitories, as opposed to the traditional large numbers of bunk beds in large impersonal rooms. Very few women in this study had stayed in hotel accommodation and if they did it was on the first night on arrival into New Zealand so that they could get their bearings.

As well as sleeping quarters, other social spaces were important for the women, rooms with sofas where they could sit and talk to other travellers, quiet rooms where they could sit and read a book or write up their diary. Finding space in which to reflect on life and find one's self was an important part of the travel experience as was the desire to socially interact with other travellers.

There are a number backpacker chains or networks throughout New Zealand; VIP, YHA, X Base as well as small independent establishments. In New Zealand, '[b]ackpacker accommodation was rated as above average by both international and domestic visitors' (Cave and Thyne, 2006: 14). The X Base chain have taken note that sometimes women require their own space and a little extra treatment; they have provided one floor of their establishments for women only, giving space and freedom to move from the bedrooms along corridors between rooms and bathrooms, often clad in undergarments and nightwear, without the 'male gaze'. I stayed in such establishments and observed that common areas were painted in pinks and pastel colours, posters advertising women's products, hair, massage and personal treatments, making for a more feminine environment. Several hair dryers were provided in the bathrooms and on arrival a package with a white towel wrapped with soap and shower gel added to the ambience. Treks backpackers in Rotorua, a brand new hostel opened in 2006, is considered upmarket and is sometimes referred to as 'flash packers', due to its modern, more chic, user friendly facilities. The owners noticed larger numbers of women rather than men being attracted to it, although it is not marketed specifically to women. The owner's daughters manage the building and has had considerable input into its design; the owner stated that:

Jim aged 60 from Treks Backpackers New Zealand:

...we thought carefully what modern travellers need and decided to remove bunk beds and have no room larger than four sharing. Double rooms and single rooms were very small but had a bathroom incorporated. Our philosophy was to provide a clean, modern place with large open spaces, a large well stocked kitchen with equipment and fridges, that's what travellers want now. Although the design it is open plan, we have three other areas, a TV corner, leather

settee in the common area and an internet section. Another feature that other hostels don't provide is actual safes for valuables and we have very well stocked information and booking facility. My daughter and myself and my wife, in our younger days travelled a lot so together we planned what the modern day traveller is looking for. So far we have had excellent feedback and have noticed larger numbers of women than men being attracted to us, although it is not marketed specifically to women.

This facility was a one off private development in a prominent location in Rotorua a very well visited hot spot in North Island. Elsewhere, in New Zealand the accommodation varies greatly in size and quality, with the city spaces being much larger and less personal, whereas some of the country locations provide quieter, home from home comforts and encourage international cooperation in their basic functioning. There is ample accommodation to select from, with some companies like BBH providing a rating system based on travellers' own comments guiding others to the hostel that best suits them.

Lina Maria aged 23 from Columbia:

In NZ the backpackers were very good, in the guide there was a % satisfaction for each backpackers and I chose those with a higher rate, I also followed Lonely Planet's tips. I was always very happy with the accommodation.

Emily aged 25 from Germany:

I prefer smaller places that are quieter and cosy y'know if you go and larger hostels there are open, noisy busy space and they just have no character and there's just loads of people and you usually find like the 18 year olds who just want to get drunk and then puke everywhere and youth hostels can be this kind of places so I prefer to go to quite small places much quieter and you get a different people that go there I think

Claudia aged 27 from Australia:

It's very hard when you go to big hostels that er, you know, people just come and go, in and out and it's really hard to sit down and get to talk to people. When it's quite small with evening meals provided it get everyone, gets everyone together

In this study the women were asked about what features were important to them and why from an accommodation point of view. Cave and Thyne (2008) found that the most important backpacker accommodation attribute in New Zealand was cleanliness. In this study the need for cleanliness was a very important feature followed by special touches made by providers to make the accommodation

homely. Cleanliness comments included: 'its really important that you've got a clean bed with a nice cover and pillow, 'fresh towel and soap'. 'a clean kitchen is really important to me, otherwise it costs you to go out and find food', 'it is important to have the toilets and washroom smelling fresh and clean'.

For example:

Vilma aged 29 from Finland:

I like smaller homier places with the owners involved. Even though I brought my own towel with me, having a towel provided by the hostels always seemed like such a luxury, small things like that make a huge difference (also: free breakfast/tea/coffee, fun planned activities).

Several places provided a place where everyone helped with the chores and sat down together to eat around one large table. They were encouraged, by the owners, to socialize with other guests. The communal meal, which involved team work, led by the owner in the preparation and washing up stages of the meal was very popular with the women who very much appreciated the owner's efforts and enthusiasm, and the opportunity to dine with international visitors. I made observations at these establishments as well as interviewing the participants and was very impressed by the feelings of camaraderie and friendship that was generated. After dinner the physical set up allowed small groups or pairs of individuals to find a quiet corner to continue conversations started during dinner, or to foster new relationships. One of these hostels had no television which appealed to many women, as old fashioned conversation predominated after the 'family orientated meal'.

Anna aged 29 from Germany:

For me good accommodation is a small place. A place where you have the feeling that the owners try to prepare home for backpackers, they have obviously put some thought in. Sometimes you come to places, everything is there what you need, erm, lamp on the side of your bed and, and you have a pillow and a sheet and everything that's important so they think about what travellers like or not

Claudia aged 27 fro Australia:

Places like this. Erm, a place that's got a, erm, give you kind of a sense of home away from home. Like here it's really comfortable, everything's got that, I don't know, homey feel. It's set up in a way that, like, the evening meals encourage people to meet each other

Megan aged 22 from the United States

Something with, er, good atmosphere, erm, if it looks cute, fireplaces always help, ha, ha. No, we just like fireplaces, I don't know. Erm, usually good beds as well.

Vera aged 40 from Germany:

how I felt last night around the fire erm, it was just great, I mean I had a great time it was so great with all the songs and everybody was, er, from different cultures and having fun and just having a lovely time and, erm, very warm atmosphere and

However, the women in this study, there was also the need for private space in order to create a balance:

Cacey aged 23 from England:

Erm, somewhere that's a bit lively but there is places where you can get away from it, so like you know you've got that bar area where you can go and socialise and meet people but you've got that quiet space so you can sit and read and not have to speak to people...

Karin aged 39 from Switzerland:

...and if I'm staying on my own and don't know anybody, so it means it's nice for me to be socialize somewhere and another place where I can read something or watch TV or having just something to do and not just staying in the bedroom but just, you know, if you get a good bunch of people on the night you stay at a place it just makes it. Balance between quiet space – to read write diary and social space dining rooms and common rooms...

Several women mentioned the word 'quiet' in describing good accommodation. These were mainly older women, and this confirms Cave and Thyne's (2008) data from a much larger sample group which also suggested that the older backpackers were particularly concerned with noise, private room options and shared bathrooms in contrast to younger, under 30's backpackers.

The women were asked to comment on any preferences or differences they observed between women only and mixed dormitory accommodation. Being in a space away from the potential male gaze was an important factor for some women and the privacy of a single sex dormitory was also important. On the whole the women felt a male free zone gave them the opportunity to relax in the company of other women, and of course the opportunity to talk about men as well as other things in their lives. Some women had no real preference and only two women noted that women only environments could become bitchy so they should be avoided. Male snoring and male odours were of particular annoyance to the women if they shared mixed dormitories:

Karin aged 39 from Switzerland:

I liked it actually more in the female dorms and there are two very simple reasons, I mean one is females snore less, they are not as loud as men, I mean they take in general more care than the men and maybe a bit bad to say this I'm not even sure if this is true but this is what I think it is, yeah and it's just easier if you have to get dressed and undressed and all these things it's just easier, I, yeah this is maybe and, and you can also talk much more freely about personal feelings

Elaine aged 26 from England:

Women's dorms are the best, men smell, they snore and you can't walk about in your jammies and underwear, you have to be conscious all the time as they may be watching. Having your own space is great.

Michelle aged 22 from Canada:

Ahm, I guess I would prefer to stay in female dorms but if I know who I am travelling with then it's not an issue. But if that I don't know anybody that I'm travelling with then I'd prefer to do a women's dorm I guess.

Heather aged 30 from England:

It, well, I prefer to stay in a female dorm, erm, mainly because more chance of men snoring and I just think they're tidier female dorms and I, I just feel more comfortable being in there to be quite honest. Erm, one I think just in terms of changing, I feel uncomfortable, I feel, you know that you can't really change at all in there, so therefore you have to go and find

somewhere else and then the facilities get a bit cramped and it's annoying. I know females can but generally you've got more chance of a bloke that's had too much to drink they make more noise smashing the doors or being loud. Also another reason and I just think freshness; men have a distinct smell the next day and the dorm also smell of it. I just like the freshness of female dorms

Megan aged 22 from the United States:

It doesn't really bother other than the fact that guys are more likely to snore, ha, ha, so I usually can sleep better in the female dormitories, ha, ha, but there's a different atmosphere when it's just girls. Yeah we talk differently than with guys, I don't know, we can't joke around as much or get more comfortable feeling around them as quickly, but err, with girls err, we just ah stayed in a room with two Scottish women last night and we had great conversation, I don't know, we were just talking about whatever and it was really fun

Women were often observed talking generally about their travel experiences to other travellers, in pairs or in groups. Younger backpackers often exchanged information about the best deals or best value products on the road to garner prestige (Riley, 1988; Murphy, 2001). Initial conversations were often trivial, a means of acquiring information, for assessment on the other person and then 'if they "connect" with the person, and/or get to know each other better, then discussion moves into more detail about touristic experiences and personal information' (Murphy, 2001: 55). According to the women in this study, friendships were accelerated in comparison to home situations, the commonality of being a traveller seems in itself to lower personal barriers and allow personal information to be communicated rapidly. They shared inner thoughts, feelings and behaviours to individuals they had recently met and as such quite strong bonds can develop between women travellers. Overall the results in this study concurred with Vogt (1976), Riley (1988), and Cohen (1973) that friendships and bonds form more quickly than in normal life situations. Women confide in other women, they tell secrets of such things as their lovers, husbands, children, their body clocks and difficulties in their lives. They do this in dormitories, dining rooms, on planes, trains, and other spaces like on the beach, often with perfect strangers, for example:

Susan aged 37 from England:

women enjoy sharing their stories, listening to others to gain acceptance and constructing a place for themselves all the women you meet travelling are from completely different back grounds but women will always find commonality and this forms a basis for their friendship and camaraderie...

Emotional bonds develop with other travellers, both with men and women. Travellers' paths cross, they meet, they have a good time and they then say goodbye, they might keep in touch and meet up at a later date but there are no guarantees of that actually happening. There was a consensus of opinion, particularly by the solo women, that the suspense and euphoria of meeting and getting on really well, was often matched by an emotional low when parting with a fellow traveller you have shared some great experiences with. 'Emotions are embodied, in a sense that they are felt and experienced, and it might be suggested that language cannot adequately capture the way emotions are felt' (Hubbard, 2005: 122):

Trudy aged 22 from Ireland:

Ha, I think just kind of the worst thing was just saying goodbye to people that you've met around the way because you're sharing some fantastic experiences with like other people that, you know, you might just meet them in the place you're staying or they might just be even across from you in the dorm and you just start chatting to them because we kind of, we talk to everyone, no matter who's around we'll try and start up a conversation and, you know, we share stories and stuff and I think saying goodbye to people that really made an impression on you eh is kind of the most kind of emotional thing an emotional pain really that you have to accept when travelling...

Noelle aged 22 from Ireland:

that was kind of, it was sad like because you know when you leave, you know you'll never be in that same kind of emotional kind of place ever again like d'you know, like even if you went back it wouldn't be the same and, you know, I think that's kinda the worst thing, just splitting up.

So far I have examined the important features of travel accommodation to the women and the social interactions that take place in accommodation spaces in particular. Next I examine the specific experiences of lesbian women and the importance of travel space to them.

#### 4.3.2 Lesbian Travel Space

Over the last 10 years, New Zealand's gay and lesbian tourism industry has grown from a network of gay and lesbian owned homestay's scattered throughout the country, to a cohesive network of accommodation ranging from backpackers, home and farm stays, and luxury lodges supplemented with a network of boutique hotels to rental car and coach services. The lesbian women interviewed in this study expressed their journeys, escapes and experiences as relative to the limited spatial freedoms which result from a socially constructed heterosexual world. They negotiate constraints by actively searching out destinations, places and spaces, where they gain some power, control and freedom to perform and express their identity. 'Gay and lesbian places are empowering places, providing men and women with a sense of community and territory' and 'have emotional and psychological importance as empowering places in a "straight" world' (Prichard et al., 2007: 276, 285). For example:

Sabina aged 29 from Germany:

it's just, it's just relaxing to be around lesbians and you don't have to explain yourself it's, yeah, it just feels normal, I feel, yeah it gives me power, it gives me energy sort of and okay as long as I'm single of course I always get a good look at all the Kivi girls.

Women want to escape the heterosexual environment and share female space with other lesbians and women to re-affirm and perform their femininity and sexual identity. Myslik (1996: 157), in discussing gay spaces comments: '[t]hese are spaces that enable not only open displays of intimacy and affection but also provide access to a variety of gay and lesbian friendly services and facilities, including shops and bars'.

Vera aged 40 from Germany:

I'm always interested in how women live and especially how lesbians live and I'm interested in the country and travelling too, erm, so it's also a little bit of time out, have a rest, to reflect my life at home and it's important for me, I mean I, I need the, the exchange with other lesbians, with other, erm, queer identified people, I like the culture and want to feel part of it,

Lesbian space in lesbian cafes and different accommodation types, like lodges and home stays visited during this research in New Zealand, created the opportunity to validate identity with others. In other words 'it offers havens of gay self-expression' (Binnie, 1995). This was very true of the New Zealand network of lesbian women providers who were very supportive of one another and made the network freely available to foreign visitors and researchers alike. One of the most common conversations revolved around the booking of accommodation in a heterosexual world where the pull of conformity and societal expectations had to be negotiated and confronted. There were numerous stories about booking (by whatever media) 'the double bed' and on arrival having staff presuming a mistake had been made during administration, once confronted by two women together. The following quote demonstrates this well:

Danielle aged 51 from England:

...we just arrived to stay in this hotel and the guy calls across the lobby as I, after I check-in coz he's apologising, you know, shouting across the room that he's terribly sorry he didn't know that we were two ladies and, golly horror, you know, he's given us a double room, he'll change the room immediately so I shouted back, you know, no it's fine, you know, it's absolutely, you know it's fine that's what we want and he just looked at me and (once the penny had dropped) he said 'oh, well that's alright with me then', ha, ha ( laughing with embarrassment).

Permission was granted, so did that make the whole performance okay? By now, because of initial presumptions by the customer services representative, an embarrassing scene had been created and performed bringing sexuality into the spotlight; something lesbian women on the whole are trying to avoid in public arenas. Any other guests in the vicinity at the time were also privy to the announcement of the couple's private sexual information.

Frequenting lesbian advertised or lesbian owned accommodations overcomes any such predicament and allows for greater relaxation and judgemental situations to develop. Hospitality staff are trained to be sensitive to such issues and can improve the experiences of the lesbian guest. Poria cites an

important finding in her study, was that 'gays and lesbians wish to be treated and given the same experiences as they perceive are given to heterosexuals' and that 'gays and lesbians want to feel that they are accepted as they are, and in the hotel context, this means mainly being able to sleep together and be treated as a couple' (Poria, 2006: 331).

Ruth aged 45 from England:

yeah I think, I think staying in a women's space in, yeah again before I actually had a partner it was, it was wonderful to have, to see women couples, erm, just being ordinary.

Liz aged 51 from Australia:

They're more able to show their affection just because of the construction of the environment yep. Well, and also because they're in that women's space where they can practice being themselves and don't have anybody watching them or expecting, you know, defining how they can be. When on holiday they can have a go and do something different.

Overall, analysis of the lesbian women's interviews demonstrates the prevalence of empowerment, confidence and increased control as benefits of their travel experiences.

#### 4.3.3 Internet Spaces

The internet was an important tool for maintaining contact with the women respondents and networking, as discussed in the methodologies Chapter 3, but it was also a very useful and widely used tool for the women travellers themselves. The women used it for planning and research purposes; booking accommodation, flights and trips; internet banking; keeping in contact with family and friends back home; and keeping in touch with other travellers met on route. This section thus briefly provides evidence of the importance of communicating with others back home by focusing on their interaction with the internet:

There is today among backpackers a frequent use of internet cafes, which work both as social meeting spots, and as nodes within a deterritorialised media space of travel weblogs, photo

sharing (Flickr), and emailing. Community-orientated media like these clearly fit the expressive nature of backpacking' (Jansson, 2007: 17).

New media, cameras, cell phones, laptops, along with the internet, alter the experience of travelling in many ways. Mobile electronic devices give the opportunity for people 'to leave traces of their selves in informational space' (Urry, 2002: 266).

A relatively small number of women wanted no contact with home, they wanted total escape and attain personal freedom. For example:

Heather aged 23 from the United States:

Oh well the majority of my contact with my family and friends is through email, I have a mass email set-up so like 50 people who I send out every once a week maybe and then my parents call me maybe once a week, ahm

Postcards were still popular with sixty percent of the women interviewed but the majority of women carried a mobile phone and 50% of them regularly sent text messages home. Letters were written by only 10% of the women and these were older women who did not, or could not, use the internet to communicate due to a lack of skills. Many women pointed out that advances in technology have greatly assisted the 'traveller' in their ability to communicate with home:

Elaine aged 26 from England:

...when my sister, she's 40, and when she first went travelling and she was, erm, I think about 20 after university, and like, yeah, she didn't have a mobile phone or email and she was saying to me how convenient it is now to take your mobile just to text people to say I'm here and email to keep in contact. Whereas she used to write a lot of letters but you know, by the time you get all that sent in the post she was at a different address or back home

Michelle aged 24 from Canada:

Ahm, when I was younger and travelling it would be a postcard that I would stay in touch with, now it's an email, ahm, and a blog I guess.

Personal blogs were not as popular as expected; only 12% of the women used them but of those that did it was regarded as a valuable resource:

Una aged 25 from Ireland:

Email is very important to me; I also make all my plane reservations online. My blog is how I keep people informed about me, and I also post all my pictures online for people to share.

Trudy aged 22 from Ireland:

Erm, it's like, the internet, I have like a web page as well where I can write up my blog and stick on photos and stuff so it kinda keeps like, like all my friends and stuff informed about what I'm doing and so they come back 'oh cool' and 'jeez I can't believe you did that' ...

Farah aged 27 from the United States:

Yeah it was hard to find time but then I knew that I had to keep my blog updated otherwise my family would kill me so, ha, ha; I've been very diligent on keeping that. I would check my email or update my blog at least once a week I was on a computer. I noticed that when I was away from, you know the beaten track or whatever and there, computers well I'd kinda get a little bit depressed because I couldn't contact them or send my latest photographs. Yeah computers and email are really important to me. I would get excited to get to access, ha, ha.

Emails were important for a number of reasons: to keep contact with loved ones and friends at home, to stop mothers worrying, to send photographs to show people what it is like and what activities have been experienced, and to receive information about what was happening at home. Perhaps of particular importance to women; 'new means of communication reinforce the security –gaining experience of still being able to contact the one's back home' (Jansson, 2007: 18). Farah in the quote above mentions how she responded negatively if she was unable to access the internet and maintain contact. The importance of email are for similar personal reasons are demonstrated in the following comments:

Yvonne aged 37 from Holland:

important then and I find it, erm, also comforting and to get emails from home and people, erm, really, likes you here, what's going on with you and, and what are you doing and, yeah it's, it's good to know people think of you

Trudy aged 22 from Ireland:

Oh like such a big part like email is great for keeping track of everything at home coz I love to know what's going on at home and stuff you know, so that's kinda cool

Lina-Maria aged 23 from Columbia:

No it's because, well with this trip I have realised that, well, it has given me some time to think about my life and I feel that, erm, keeping your friends with you it's a, it's a quite important point in your life so I think that you have to communicate and keep in touch with them if you want, if you expect to, to stay with them longer when you get back home...

Claudia aged 27 from Australia:

with my parents they always want to know what I'm doing, make sure everything is ok but for me it's, like, good to touch base, erm, keep in contact with people because when I go home, you know, I want to see them and, er, kind of the only stability in my life you know, it's a constant while everything else is always changing. You know, you meet people and they go away, but you're family, especially is always there...

Hence, the act of emailing can provide both emotional support and help maintain personal stability by maintaining social relationships back at home; physical separation can to an extent be bridged through social interaction in virtual space. By receiving messages from home and by describing and providing photographs of their touristic experiences, a sense of integration appeared to be gained by the women. The importance of these aspects of social interactions in the virtual world may be of greater significance to solo women travellers; indeed, further research into this aspect would be of great interest.

The internet was considered an important element of communication for other purposes; 'internet banking is so easy, I can pay off my credit card bills without my mam having to see what I have been spending', 'for getting information about the next place I will visit', 'or book accommodation and flights while I am on the move', 'keeping in touch with other travellers'. Sorensen (2003) debates the merits and impacts of the internet on backpacker tourism, emphasizing its use in communication not just with home but with fellow travellers en route, enabling travellers to link up easily in reality by mapping each other's journeys. There were a few individuals, however, who did not value the internet as highly and felt it was a waste of valuable travelling time to be sitting in an internet café writing home:

Helen aged 30 from England:

Yeah, and this, see this is it like Ange is going to spend an hour on the internet and I'm like woh, I'm not going to sit around while you spend an hour on the internet, looking at your emails

Susan aged 37 from England:

But it's just so time consuming typing out emails and stuff. It's amazing how much time and money it takes isn't it and I'm just thinking I don't want to be sitting in an internet café I want to be out enjoying myself

Other women mentioned they enjoyed escaping from the constant rings of the mobile phones and the demands on the self which they can bring.

Karin aged 37 from Switzerland:

I wanted to be remote from my home destination and wanted to be alone even though my boyfriend is at home, I keep phone calls to a minimum of one a week to maintain that remoteness.

Although the internet provides great opportunity to communicate with those back home and other travellers, its use in a way contradicted some of the women's motivational intentions of travel which was to escape emotional and social constraints of home. As women travelled they reflected on their home life, perhaps reassessing the importance of individuals back home.

Modern communication methods allowed the women travellers to maintain social networks, maintain relationships, to promote a sense of being present while absent (Lury, 1997; Gergen, 2002). The liminal experience of travel 'is transformed into a continuing engagement with established relationships and ongoing connection to people back home' (White and White, 2007: 101). Such communication helps keep loved ones happy and indirectly the women traveller gains emotional support from family and friends. 'The general pattern is that young people tend to be in contact with 'home' or with 'family friends' elsewhere or on the road. Travel is therefore becoming integrated into the 'connected lifestyles' of young people around the globe' (Richards and Wilson, 2003: 34). In this study a greater proportion of young women were more consistent in their habits of contacting home, the older women had a greater tendency to phone home occasionally especially if they were not internet literate.

This section investigated the role of internet space in the women traveller's itineraries. The internet was an extremely important tool for the women, to keep contact with those back at home, maintaining the emotional bonds, albeit at a distance. The internet was also used for planning, booking and internet banking purposes. Some women used blogs as a replacement for a diary and uploaded photographs to instantly advertise their journey and experiences to other parts of the world.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter considered the psychological and sociological dimensions of independent women travellers' experiences in New Zealand. It began by considering the women's motivations to embark upon a travel journey, characterised by the independent traveller's desire to experience an evolving itinerary and the desire experience the unplanned as well as periods of hanging out and being sociable

with fellow travellers. Many motivations were identified but desire to explore the world, to achieve an ambition and to grasp an opportunity were initial motivations. Motivation according to age of life stage was observed by several tourism providers in New Zealand; gaining experience of the world and having fun, was a feature of the younger women; the mid age group between thirty and forty were often experiencing a midlife crisis and were wanting to withdraw from their social positions and expectations in the home environment to discover 'me-time' and self-discover. The older age group over 40's wanted to discover other cultures, the scenery and enjoy their new found opportunity. The common factor underlying most of the women's motivation to travel was that they were experiencing some kind of transition or crossroads in their lives and wanted to find a liminal space and freedom to think and explore themselves and their future. Emotions were an important factor in where they had come from, what they did during the journey and how they returned home. The beauty, peacefulness and perceived safety and freedom were important attributes, as well as adventure opportunities for visiting New Zealand and for the lesbian women the perceived gay friendliness.

Solo travellers emphasised the freedom, self reliance and empowerment gained through solo travel. They felt they discovered a space for themselves in which to self reflect and perhaps self-develop without being pulled and pushed by external factors, particularly the demands of others on their time namely, social expectations and constraints. Escaping their identities associated with home and work gave them time to consider alternative identities. Pride and confidence and increased self belief and reliance are major benefits. The negative side of lone travel is relates to the element of sharing; social interaction with other travellers was very important to the solo women, someone to talk to about their daily encounters. Eating alone, as Jordan and Gibson (2005) found was a problem, however, in this study, especially in backpacker accommodation, travellers cook for themselves to keep the travel costs down and also to share the dining space with other travellers, thus overcoming the eating out alone problems. The main concern for solo women is that of personal safety, particularly in dark urban areas,

(Wilson and Little, 2008) although this was mentioned several times by women travellers, it was not dwelt upon because New Zealand was considered a very safe destination to visit, which allowed for greater relaxation than other perceived 'less safe' destinations such as India and Africa. The difference being that it was felt that the male gaze in New Zealand was no more intimidating than in the home societies, whereas in other destinations the male gaze was intimidating and problematic.

The construction of new dimensions to women's identities, through their travel experiences and interactions in New Zealand was discussed. The first section considers the construction of women's self-identity and the role of tourism in its development, through travel experiences in New Zealand. The second section discusses travel benefits to women's identities through entering a transitional travel zone, a place where reassessment of identity and future directions can be considered. The third section investigates social interactions and identity development. The fourth section investigates hidden identities in terms of lesbian women who often hide their identity but see travel as a means of mobilising their identities. The fifth and final section examines women's story telling and self-reflection about their journeys. Through transitional travel and the associated reflexivity, self actualisation occurred with potential repercussions for the next phase of the women's life, a new beginning. The older women in particular, who may have performed the identity of a mother and wife for many years suddenly find their old roles have expired, as the children grow up, or they are widowed or divorced. In these times of crisis, travel is being used by independent women travellers, as a time and space to re-adjust, reassess and find the 'real' women or 'self', who has been semi submerged for many years. Because of rapid social change in the older women's lifetimes, the women very much appreciated the opportunity to travel that had, unexpectedly, opened up for them. Through storytelling and general conversation, shared experiences, feedback and self reflection the women are able to answer the posed questions.

Backpacker accommodations are ideal places for women to share conversations and daily adventures, for example, during the evening meal or in the social areas and the dormitories. The women felt they met a wide spectrum of other women in this way, women whose paths they may never cross under normal circumstances, and could therefore potentially learn from many more perspectives and friendships. The women commented on the importance of social interaction to tell stories, have fun, have a laugh, tell jokes and just 'carry on'. They felt that by interacting with other women from different cultures was a benefit because it gave greater first hand understating and perhaps a wider perspective, improving the possibility of them being better world citizens.

The importance of travel space, particularly accommodation space in the form of backpacker accommodations and lodges for the women were discussed. Socialisation with fellow travellers was very important and well designed and cared for places were important to the women. A homely atmosphere, which was clean and fresh ambience was preferred and a place where there were spaces to socialised, common rooms and quiet corners to write up diaries or sort through photographs. Smaller hostel were preferred because they were most likely to provide a homely more intimate atmosphere where friendships could more easily be formed. Small touches by the providers such as clean towels, individual lights above the beds and pleasant decoration was also important to the women travellers. Provision of internet facilities was also important for future planning, bookings and maintaining important links with friends and family.

Lesbian travellers talked about hidden identities in home environments, and saw travel as a potential means of expressing lesbian identity because they felt they were escaping the social, heterosexual, constraints and transporting themselves into a less restricted environment. An environment where they

could perhaps find neutral space in a country that had a reputation to being gay friendly and where they were anonymous. Space within lesbian accommodations or environments was consciously sought in order to perform their sexual identity with, other lesbians, confirming and feeling their identity. 'Lesbian women are escaping the structures and associated constraints of home life in two ways; of being a woman in a heterosexual world and of being homosexual women in a heterosexual, often homophobic world' Myers (2010: 132). The importance of lesbian space was also discussed in relation to accommodation. New Zealand provides a network of women owned and operated accommodations, some of which were visited by the researcher and lesbian women guests. Escaping the heterosexual world and associated constraints was a major motivation for the lesbian women. Finding a space in which to perform a lesbian identity and relaxing by socialising with other lesbians was very important feature of their travel.

Finally, the importance of internet space to the women travellers is discussed. Major advances in communication technology are changing the world and hence, the travel experience. The traditional, telegrams, postcard and letter home (often arriving after the personal themselves had arrived home) are now replaced by phenomenally faster and more efficient than could ever have been imagined; through the internet. Internet cafes and internet areas in backpacker accommodation give the travellers the opportunity of regularly and instantly contacting their family and friend. Planning, internet banking, booking flights, accommodation and activities were often booked ahead using the internet, and informing anxious mothers of maintained safety was an important aspect for the travelling woman. As well as giving information back home, the women mentioned the importance of receiving information about their temporarily abandoned social world back home, giving them a feeling of security, comfort, and emotional stability. A small number of women felt it a waste of valuable travel time to be sat for hours emailing other back home. The following chapter explores the women traveller's adventure experiences in New Zealand.



## CHAPTER 5: WOMEN'S ADVENTURE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND

### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the environmental interactions and associated embodied encounters the women experienced within the New Zealand environment. The women were asked about what activities they had chosen to participate in whilst visiting New Zealand in an attempt to understand what they are interested in and what benefits, if any, they felt that they had gained. They participated in a wide range of activities, including extreme adventure, soft adventure, tramping and wildlife tourism activities. The younger women had a tendency to participate in the more physical adventure activities whilst the older women preferred the more sedate, relaxing pursuits New Zealand had to offer. Richards and Wilson (2003: 26) found that '[y]oung travellers (under 26) place more emphasis on social contact and excitement, while slightly older travellers are seeking more individualised experiences and are less often in search of extreme experiences.' A heightened awareness of personal self-consciousness and personal control was experienced by some women as they undertook what they referred to as 'cool experiences'.

Tramping experiences varied considerably, from some gentle unaccompanied short walks into the New Zealand bush (countryside), to, at the other end of the difficulty scale, extreme glacier hiking in the mountains. The benefits of walking experiences ranged from an affinity with nature and the great outdoors, embodied mental and physical benefits, the development of place knowledge and social interaction with others. Meanwhile, wildlife tourism in New Zealand also boasts a wide variety of possibilities. The women in this study were overwhelmingly drawn to whale and dolphin encounters. Whale watching is a growth industry worldwide; New Zealand's is very well established and has a high success rate in spotting humpbacks and southern right whales not far off shore. Although many

individuals only viewed the marine wildlife, other women physically interacted with dolphins and seals in the ocean. According to the detailed and enthusiastic story telling of these women, these physical interactions were very special embodied experiences.

## 5.1 ADVENTURESS ACTIVITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

Backpackers associate 'extreme' and 'soft' adventure activities with New Zealand and acknowledge that 'adventures are particularly effective when it comes to expressing a strong and independent identity' (Lightfoot, 1997: 127). Indeed, Tourism New Zealand promotes New Zealand as 'the adventure capital of the world' and as such supports a wide range of outdoor activities. New Zealand possesses the essential ingredients of landscape, climate, local outdoor recreation tradition, entrepreneurship and recognition at a governmental level that tourism is an industry which they should fully promote and develop.

This section details and describes the women traveller's experiences and participation in outdoor adventure activities as experienced in New Zealand during the summer of 2006-2007 and it's associated benefits. Women tourist's perceptions of this adventure provision in New Zealand are that it is well organised, regulated and safe, it is relatively cheap in comparison to other places in the world and it is varied allowing for several opportunities in one location. It has the added kudos of adventure activities being performed in a highly recognised place on earth (Myers, 2010). It was a New Zealander, A.J. Hackett who popularised the adrenaline activity, the bungee jump, followed by other inventions appropriate to the 'great outdoor experience'; jet boating, scuba diving, kayaking, white-water rafting, swimming with dolphins and seals, caving, tramping, canyon swinging, river sledging, luge and zorbing (rolling down a hill in a big plastic ball). Also available to domestic and international tourists alike are

many National Parks and walking tracks/trails including the world famous Tongoriro crossing (volcanic landscape), Milford track in Fiordland and Heaphy Track in Abel Tasman National Park.

As with many tourism experiences the search for the 'authentic' is the ultimate goal, so bungee jumping at the original location coupled with the **Lord of the Rings** landscape was in high demand. Across all the age groups there was a keen interest in a wide range of outdoor adventure activities, the extreme adrenaline rush experiences of sky diving, bungee jumping, river rafting, river sledding and heli-hiking were sought by a larger percentage of younger women although there were a few exceptions. Indeed, Leeming and Tripp (1994: 55) have argued that 'younger women are more likely to look for adventure through travel and to expect physical activity to be part of their vacation'. Generally speaking the older women (over 35s) had a greater interest in the more "soft "adventure activities like jet boating, scuba diving and the luge as well as tramping (walking) in the New Zealand bush. Other activities chosen by the women in this study were: cycling, fishing, black water rafting, sailing, hot air ballooning, piloting an aircraft, motorcycling, paragliding, climbing, horse trekking, snorkelling, surfing and swimming. Additionally, a number of women preferred nature tourism as opposed to adventure tourism and were quite happy leaving the strenuous activities to what they termed 'the young ones' (Myers, 2010). Most activities were booked during the visit, only tramping treks such as the famous Milford Track and swimming with dolphins at Kaikoura were pre-booked to ensure a place as these activities are very popular, often based on advice gained from the popular Lonely Planet travel guide. In order to preserve the wilderness ideal and to prevent overcrowding a very limited number of walkers are permitted to use some tracks in New Zealand and bookings have to be made months if not years in advance. Travellers also relied on word of mouth recommendations from fellow travellers and the abundant information brochures provided by the tourism industry.

### 5.1.1 Risk Taking Experiences

Traditionally 'adventure' and adventurous activities have largely been a male domain, however things are gradually changing and according to Elsrund (2001: 613) 'women appear to be as "adventurous", "risk-taking" and "daring" as any male traveller interviewed'. Deforges (2000) acknowledges that having suggested that both men and women are adventurers does not mean that their acts have the same meaning to them or the same meaning to those listening to the adventure stories created. He quotes one female traveller as stating that she selectively talked about her travel experiences, dependent upon the audience, as she found her acts of independence offended some men. The women in this study, predominantly from westernised cultures, were sufficiently culturally and socially enlightened to have the ambition to embrace the adventurous opportunities and challenges presented to them. Clearly, '[r]isk-taking and perception of risk is socially and culturally nuanced, with differences in groups of women impacting upon the gendered nature of risk-taking and risk-avoidance' (Lupton, 1999: 866). The physical and psychological challenges were sometimes very frightening and well outside the cocoon of a familiar comfort zone back at home. Knowing what choices to make, how they would react and what they would feel with regard to adventure pursuits created 'risky questions' in the minds of the women travellers:

Paula aged 25 from Ireland comments that:

Yeah you're just out of your own comfort zone, you don't really know what to be doing, ha, ha, it's scary and risky but you want to try...

Helen aged 30 from England further commented:

The adrenaline starts the moment you make that decision to do it. Because of the apprehension you're kind of nervous, excited erm, worried that technically it could be the last thing you ever do and you're thinking is it really worth it..

Nikki aged 23 from Australia adds:

I thought it would be really fun but it's, you know, there's, everyone I think sort of had that list in the back of their head of things they want to do before they die...

At times risks are taken and personal boundaries pushed to the limit, pushed more here in an unfamiliar environment with new friendship groups and strangers, often in opposition to normal behaviours in the home environment. 'What is clear is that taking a risk can be fun and desirable aspect of leisure activity, 'risky' behaviour providing a way for young women to negotiate and contest dominant discourses around feminine, cultural identities' (Green and Singleton, 2006: 853). Green and Singleton (2006: 866) go on to note that 'young women's construction of risk and the delights to be found in risk taking are complex and subjective'. It is the facing of such risks found in action and adventure that allows people to feel self-actualised (Elias and Dunning, 1986). In the context of this research, risk-taking was seen as a necessary challenge and desire of the women and it was not just 'primarily a material, physical fact, but rather a device used to construct a story' (Elsrud, 2004: 298). For example:

Michelle aged 24 from Canada reflected that:

And you're just wondering what's coming next and you're like oh god I hope it's not as bad as that last one. They shout instruction but a lot of the time you can't hear for the racing water but you just have to trust them to keep you safe so yeah, you've got wetsuits on haven't you and you've got flippers on and a helmet, because you have to really hold your breath when, coz you're like pummelled in water like a big washing machine kinda thing then you come up eventually but even though yeh you might be a wee, like five seconds under the water it seems really long when you're holding your breath and I, the others behind they all came down and they just all looked pale, ha, ha (same conversation continued).

Corinne aged 26 from Ireland commented that:

Yeah you could see the whites of their eyes, yeah, ha, ha it wasn't funny at the time I felt I can't do anything to help someone else I've just got to look after myself, I'm gonna drown myself, yeah, you were fighting for your life almost, but we said we'll always remember that day and will tell that story lots especially back in Ireland...

Paula aged 32 from England added that:

The jet boat ride, erm, was amazing feeling, I was really nervous beforehand, erm, not knowing what to expect, erm, and was a bit nervous in case there was any heights involved, any cliff edges, erm, but when I actually experienced it, it was amazing it felt, it was, I felt free, erm, it was a weird sensation because it was quite scary and you were out of control, erm, your faith was basically in the driver (he was a hotty, ha, ha) (girly giggles followed )I think my friends back home will be impressed that I dared to go a jet boat..

These adventure stories will be retold, repeated and used as a tool to construct a new adventurous identity. The women in this study were able to define themselves according to their individual adventure experiences. 'Thus risk-taking is a particularly strong story about the "self" an "adventure narrative" that can only be highly valued in opposition to something different: the non-adventurer' (Elsrud, 2001: 603). 'Telling stories is a central part of conveying the meaning of travel' (Deforges, 2000: 938) and as Munt (1994: 112) puts it 'travelling has emerged as an informal qualification with the passport, acting, so to speak, as professional qualification; a record of achievement and experience'.

### 5.1.2 Skydiving Experiences

Overall, tandem sky-diving and bungee-jumping were considered the most popular activities in which the women participated. For those who had performed the two activities comparisons between the two were often mentioned:

Laura aged 27 from England states that:

Skydiving was an adrenaline rush but not as much as the bungee. I think you have to throw yourself off a bungee bridge, erm, it's kind of like a completely different feeling, just looking at the edge and jumping yourself and you can actually see sort of like the floor, erm, but no that was, it was a proper, I was more scared about doing that..

Karin aged 26 from the United States compares activities stating that:

Oh, yeah its fine I think, I mean it lasts longer than bungee jumping but as a pure adrenaline rush I prefer bungee jumping..

When re-living the sky diving experience the women were really animated and excited. They had a tendency to talk quickly and at length, as there seemed to be so much narrative to convey to the researcher. The quotes following from the women in this study demonstrate how adventure experiences can be lived, vividly remembered and crafted into one's own life stories:

Noelle aged 22 from Ireland remembered:

The best one I can remember is skydiving, erm just falling out of the plane and cruising over the Lake Taupo was absolutely amazing, you could actually see like the circle of like the world yeah, it was really weird you could just see sort of like the bends absolutely amazing. I highly recommend skydiving to everybody

Susan aged 37 from England reflected at length that:

I don't know how you get out of the plane but one minute you're sitting on the edge of the plane and the next minute you feel yourself falling out of the plane and then your body kind of just freezes, there was like, I don't know, it must be a second or a couple of seconds when you just think 'Oh shit! I've just jumped out of a plane!' and then you think, your body just sort of can't comprehend what you've just done, you just, your brain and your body just can't, you just go 'oh my god!' and you, you've got all sorts of forces on your body, you're like in the air just free-falling and then it, after, after a few seconds you sort of think 'I'm kind of okay' and this is, then you just think 'wow this is amazing' and you look down and you see. You just end up sitting on the floor thinking, but afterwards it was like, I was like jelly when I got to the ground and I thought I don't know whether I'll be able to stand up, I felt like jelly and afterwards even for about a day afterwards I felt really spaced out, like really weird, I felt like, I felt like something had changed like I'd done something really dramatic and that things wouldn't be the same ever again and it's really weird I can't describe it, it's really hard to describe, it was like I was a, different somehow, I was different but I do feel like a different person, it's really weird coz I've jumped out of a plane, it's really odd but fantastic, ha, ha just fantastic,, one of the best experiences of my life.

This thirty seven year old interviewee had been having a mental battle with herself over a number of weeks as to whether she would dare do a sky dive or not, she wanted to but a sense of fear was holding her back. However, eventually she overcame her feelings of stress and anxiety associated with risk and earned herself the feelings of exhilaration and accomplishment. Such a background of self-challenge and ultimate success appeared very emotional to her.

Laura aged 27 from England adds:

it was just it's at the sort of point where you just feel really insignificant it was just a vast amount of space to see and you're just sort of floating through it, it was just an amazing to think that you could see sort of like the tip of the South Island and a lot of the North Island it was like oh my god. and then we could see these tiny little cows in the field down below like and as we got nearer the cows got bigger and it was, yeah it was funny. Amazing it was just the whole feeling of falling as well sort of being like under control, and then when you get your pictures as well you can see just everywhere and you're like wow, I actually jumped and you know I can think I just did that for myself wow, yeah...

As this traveller relives her experience through words she reveals the feeling of empowerment gained through the experience and also her own significance or self perspective in the space around her. Above all other aspects in the interviews, the physical adventure and environmental encounters were when the women's recollections and memories were more vivid, descriptive and meaningful and they were recalled with a real sense of alertness and great enthusiasm. 'The benefits of physical activity surpass the health benefits. Through physical activity the body can be liberated and 'the benefits of using the body gives women control over their bodies rather than being the object of male gaze and control' (Small, 2007: 75-76). The need to do something just for oneself and the great sense of empowerment and achievement gained after success are demonstrated in the two quotes above.

Sandra aged 29 from Austria adds:

I didn't at one point feel nervous about going out of a plane, I think because the guy that I was with as well he reassured me about everything, and he was like oh it's, it's noisy. At one point I was holding on to him and he said what's the worst that could happen, you could fall out of a plane, ha ha and I thought but yeah that's pretty much what I'm gonna do.

In this quote the humour, friendship and camaraderie before and during the activity appeared an important factor in the enjoyment and in reassuring early fears and dampening any self doubt. As Deforges (2000: 934) argues 'qualities of adventure, naturalness, difference, which precisely made travel useful in the identities of the people interviewed'. Similarly in this study, the adventure activities in the natural surroundings of the New Zealand landscape allowed the women to participate in different experiences, have different feelings, face different challenges, and see themselves in a different light.

### 5.1.3 Emotional Experiences

Henderson (1992: 286) argues that 'women identify the outdoors with a passage of self-discovery and spiritual completeness as well as overcoming self-doubt'. The women in this study acknowledged the beauty of the New Zealand landscapes and were emotionally moved by some of the sights and sounds whilst participating in the adventure activities. When asked to describe an special emotional moment relating to their adventure in New Zealand, it wasn't just the physicality of the movement or activity being performed but all that it encapsulated in that moment in time (Myers, 2010). After climbing the Southern Alps, Jessie aged 40 from England commented on an emotional moment related to her achievement:

looking across green plains and rolling green hills then blue snow capped mountains and clear blue skies makes the challenge to get there worth it, I felt really emotional standing up on top looking back down to where we started...

Reflecting on a dolphin watching trip, Lee-Ester aged 67 from the United States stated that:

Ahm, looking out of a lava tube framed the ocean, ahm, yeah that whole bay was probably the best I've seen yet, and that was before we got out to the dolphins, seeing them just filled me with emotion. We were so lucky to find wild dolphins well they came up to the boat and seemed really curious about us, just exciting and special...

Remembering a night cruise around Milford Sound, Anna aged 29 from Germany commented:

the overnight cruise when you stand on the, on the boat and all the stars above you and the moon, we had full moon which was really really strong light and that was great a really special feeling as well, I suppose, yeah, almost like making the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. Having my partner there to made it so romantic we held hands really tightly, mmmm..

After ballooning over the Canterbury Plains, Diana aged 63 from England reflected on her emotional experience:

I really enjoyed the excitement of the balloon ride, a once in a lifetime experience and yeah, what I really enjoyed was that view of the scenery was incredible and there's sort of mountains one side and sea the other and then sort of quite a big kind of rural area which is comparatively

flat and the rising in the early in the morning was stunning, it brought a tear to my eye it was so moving, it's hard to describe if you when you weren't there...

Powch (1994: 19) agrees that the outdoors, or wilderness, has a profound impact on learning and argues that '[t]here's something inherent in wilderness experiences that goes beyond the benefits that can result in a self-defence class or a climbing class," adding that "being in wilderness is like being enveloped by a sense of belonging and being "in place"'. For the women interviewed in this study travel adventure experiences 'played a relatively powerful role in helping them to feel as though they were moving towards a rewarding self in the future' (Desforges, 2000: 935). Through the adventure activities chosen, the women appeared to absorb elements of both the environment around them and the specific emotional and physical feeling associated with whatever they were performing or taking part in (Myers, 2010). The fear and apprehension, the excitement and the combination of these elements seemed to give a deep sense of satisfaction, which was not always verbally expressed as much as sensed in this study by the researcher by body language and facial expressions.

#### 5.1.4 Multi-sensual Experiences

Small (2007: 78) considered the holiday memories of women and girls with regard to sensual encounters and concluded that 'the visual sense dominated but that many holiday memories were associated with other senses'. Similarly in this study many examples were given describing the importance of other senses: touch (*the wind in your hair, I felt free, erm, it was a weird sensation, it was really hard to breathe*) hearing (*but a lot of the time you can't hear for the racing water, the noise of the wind racing past your ears, the bubbling mud pools*) and kinesthetic experiences (*it got a little wavy, the whole feeling of falling, the forces on your body*). 'Traditionally our understanding of tourist experiences has privileged the visual (which traditionally has more to do with the mind and masculinity) over the body and other senses which are related more closely to femininity' (Small, 2007: 78). Veijola and Jokinen's (1994) work leads us towards an understanding of the bodily senses in tourism, in that the

body provides a point of 'affordance' between ourselves and our surroundings. Questions about 'the increasing recognition of the plurality of senses that give access to the world' (Crouch, 1999: 4), and the fact that tourism 'demands new metaphors based more on "being, doing, touching and seeing" rather than just "seeing"' (Cloke and Perkins, 1998c: 189) have consequently been recognized.

## 5.2 TRAMPING THE NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE

Walking, or as they say in New Zealand 'tramping', in the bush, (countryside) was one of the main physical activities, in which the women engaged. This confirms the findings of Richards and Wilson (2003: 26), who found that, '[w]alking/trekking and cultural events are most popular among women respondents, while male respondents activities tend to focused on sports and adrenaline experiences.' A variety of walking experiences were undertaken, from organized group walks, to self-guided walks along well know New Zealand tracks such as the Milford Track in Fiordland and the Tongariro crossing in the volcanic centre of New Zealand. Several younger women in particular challenged themselves physically when glacier and mountain walking. Some flew up to snow covered mountain peaks by helicopter to avoid the long uphill struggle and then descended on foot in a guided activity called heli-hiking. These walks were led by experienced leaders to ensure safety and were physically demanding and energetic, but were available to novices with a reasonable degree of physical fitness.

Trudy aged 21 from Ireland describes one such experience as follows:

the heli-hiking - they drop you three quarters of the way up and you just tour around and that was amazing. It was breathtaking, like you're walking along this like big ice glacier and like you, your leader or your, your guide he's like hacking out paths and stuff in the ice and like you go through ice caves and ice tunnels and like you'd be going along, like to these like big cracks in the ice that like, are like about twice as high as ye then you have to kinda like squeeze through them and it was ah it was amazing, it was really cool...

Karin aged 26 from the United States further comments that:

I mean the glaciers were really great, that was really fun the glacier hiking and they have some little rabbit holes and you can slide through them, you're sliding through a glacier it's a pretty fantastic experience, just being up on a big block of ice...

The challenge and physicality of these more strenuous walks appealed to the younger women, who on the whole saw the experience of glacier hiking as great fun and a 'cool' thing to do. Others gained pride in their achievements and very much appreciated the rewarding views from the mountain tops. Photographs served as a memento as well as proof of the achievement. Nikki aged 23 from Australia noted that:

...yeah we climbed for hours, so tiring but it was absolutely amazing but it was 360 degree views around and they were covered in snow there was a lake and Queenstown down below, just amazing, absolutely amazing, I was so proud of myself, we took a few photographs to prove we made it..

Several women chose a wide variety of shorter, usually signposted tracks in National Parks and other popular and advertised walking areas in which to wander and amble at a relaxed pace. Short walks to viewpoints, to picnic areas and natural wonders were popular with all age groups and became a part of their whole experience of the outdoors. One guided short walk, popular with all age groups, was underground through limestone caves. Anne aged 65 from Canada commented that:

But for me I would say the best walk was in the Glowworm Caves, although I was a bit scared of being in some of the small places. it was erm, unbelievable, like really, I don't know how to describe, the caves themselves, they were spectacular, but the Glowworm Cave itself especially was wonderful. Awe, one cave they called cathedral cave was a massive cavern and all the limestone formations were dripping down for the ceiling, they said the echo was a perfect sound. It was really quite an peaceful and moving, quite relaxing really and when they turned off the lights in the glow worm caves, it was quite magical, Peter Pan like I think, like little stars twinkling peacefully in the sky. It is like a fairy land as you go in. It is in total darkness and you see the sparkle like millions of stars up above. The glow worm is actually the larva of a fly. It builds a cocoon in which you can see it moving up and down. It then sends down up to 72 silken like sticky threads and waits. This is what makes it sparkle and appears to look like stars. Yeah I think that was the best and most unusual walk.

Hiking through an underground environment added further environmental aspects to their touristic

experiences: containment within an enclosed space, fear of the unfamiliar, bodily awareness in a cold, dark, still place. Other walking experiences the women undertook in New Zealand consisted of short lower level walks, in coastal settings, interior National Parks, in thermal parks, along coastal tracks, in rainforests and Kauri forests. Walkers were traversing unfamiliar paths 'between an unknown country ahead and an already forgotten country behind, the walk moves in at best within provisional parcels of space: this slope, this view of the coast ahead' (Wylie, 2005: 246). In this study the 'parcels of space' served as places to explore the New Zealand environment, to aesthetically appreciate natural landscapes, places to relax, places to reflect and places to connect to nature. The women's walking narrative included stopping to listen to '*the power of the ocean*' or the '*the Kia's squawking*'; to smell the '*beautiful flowers*'; to feel the '*smoothness of the rock*' or '*the bark of the really ancient Kauri tree*', to lay in the '*soft fine sand*' to stop and inspect the '*shapes of the ice*' or '*take another photograph of the unusual landscape*'. In comparison to movement in urban space Edensor (2000a: 87), notes that 'a rural walk is more peaceable, with sensations felt at a slower rhythm.' Interestingly, none of the women mentioned the competitive 'challenge of the mountain', with a wish or desire to conquer it.

### 5.2.1 Walking Benefits

Like other forms of travel and tourism, walking can be conceived of as a 'search for a vantage point from which to grasp and understand life' (Adler, 1989: 1375) and 'to transmit identity' (Edensor, 2000b: 81). The benefits of walking experiences range from an affinity with nature and the great outdoors, mental and physical benefits, the development of place knowledge and the social interaction with others. According to Edensor (2000a: 104) 'walking is a way of being in the world that combines an experience of the sensual, the serendipitous and the irruptive body during a passage among a material nature'. With reference to his study in the British countryside he explores the ideas that walking provides the framework for reflexivity, is an embodied practice and is a means of escape. He states that

walking in the countryside 'evolves into a practice to achieve a reflexive awareness of the self, and particularly the body and the senses' and is widely proclaimed as a 'natural activity which frees the individual and the body' (Edensor, 2000a: 82), and is 'bound up with notions of individuality and self development, with a retreat from the city and the urban self, and towards a freeing of the body, a rediscovery of childish sensation and aesthetic and moral regeneration' (Edensor, 2000a: 84). In this study several women mentioned relaxation, escape from the rest of the world, and were convinced that walking experiences made them feel 'better' within themselves. There were several references made by the women to the restorative properties of their walking experiences in New Zealand; for example, "*it recharges your battery*", "*it allows you to relax and forget your problems*", and "*the fresh air and beautiful scenery improves your mood*". Some participants emphasized the environmental conditions allowed '*time for thought*', '*time to reflect on my own life*' and '*I feel free and can think more clearly*'.

The body is the physical structure through which we experience, feel and sense the world around us. The famous walking tracks in New Zealand mentioned above require sustained physical effort, stamina and commitment to achieve success. They usually involve over night camps on route as they are completed over a several day period and as such require the participants to carry a large rucksack with tents, sleeping bags, extra clothing, first aid and food rations. As such, many bodily experiences are lived and breathed. The weight on the body of the heavy backpack, the blistered feet, the sunburn face, the cold and wet climate, the biting insects, the changing temperatures between day and night, the challenge of exhaustion, and the changing breathing patterns as the terrain rises and falls.

### 5.2.2 Volcanic Encounters

New Zealand is famous for its green mountainous landscapes as well as its volcanic and coastal features. Some women ventured into the managed volcanic areas some were fully guided for safety

reasons, e.g. the White Island Trip and other self guided parks such as Waiotapu near Rotorua, along purpose built signed walkways. There are few areas in the world where all the senses are stimulated to the extent they are in New Zealand's thermal activity parks.

Paula aged 31 from the UK, described her walk with reference to her senses:

I walked inside White Island an active volcano. I just could not envisage the lunar landscape. You read about something and then try and imagine it, but then experiencing it for real it's different it was just so exciting yeah scary but exciting. We were on the boat approaching the island, the fumes were billowing out high in the sky it was really scary, they gave us all gas masks to wear if we needed them when we landed, and we did you couldn't survive long without. The smell was really strong like bad eggs; you know those stink bombs and the gases seemed to attack your lungs. And I was doing something I never ever thought I would, walking inside the live cone of a volcano. They said when we enter the crater there is no point in running if the earth starts to shake because it'

s either a normal daily earth quake or a much bigger eruption, in other words we were now in the hands of the gods. I questioned whether I was doing the right thing putting myself at risk but then if your time is up ehm whatever. We walked one behind the other, behind the guide they told us the crackly rocks were very thin in places so we had to take great care. There were boiling bubbling mud pools, bright yellow expanses of sulphur crystals and other white ones, there were small explosions in many directions, some white smoke or steam. When we got to the central part we looked over the edge into a massive grey, green sort of lake he said it was some kind of bubbling steaming acid, it was really noisy and even more frightening, I never thought I would ever be inside an active volcano, wow it was well worth it. I don't know why but it felt safer to stand quite close to someone else.

Anne aged 55 from England also added that:

...the walk up was really steep, it was really rocky and dry and sort of dusty, but an easy path to follow. All around us there were impressive volcano peaks. There was one point when I stopped and put my hand on the rocks and looked out over the landscape, I can still bring back that memory. I took a deep breath in so I could remember the smell; I could feel the heat in the stones in my hands. And now I can nearly bring back how it felt, just the enormity of it such a tremendous like lunar landscape, yeah I suppose I imagined this may be what it's like on the moon.

According to Tuan (1977: 11) 'odours often lend character to places making them easier to identify and remember' as in this study the verbal expressions of the associated smells give life and realism to the touristic experience and perhaps make it easier to remember. In everyday life, personal odours 'define

and characterize people.' Previously, in this study, the importance of smell was stated by the women with regard to the unpleasant and unwanted male odours in dormitory situations. Synott (1993: 5) considers odours to be 'statements about identity' and as such are important aspects of everyday life and should therefore be considered important aspects of the tourist environment with the power to evoke memories of touristic experiences. Moving on to the multi-sensual stimulation of the thermal parks Liz aged 58 from England commented that:

I was fascinated by that thermal area. Erm, I've never seen anything like it before, erm, the colours were amazing and it was just nice being so close to nature and the landscape, yeah it was amazing the, erm, champagne pool, the colours of the champagne pool, fantastic rainbow colours, I got some great photos and erm, the mud, the bubbling mud, it was dull and grey but really interesting because it was constantly moving and making splodgy sort of noises and erm, the, well you couldn't get too close it was dangerous you could feel the heat on your face if you got too close.

Paula aged 32 from England added that:

Erm, they just looked so tranquil and just in a, you know, from the distance they just looked so colourful and beautiful, then when you walked up closer the smell was terrible, it was bright green that one wasn't it the worst, that arsenic one. You wanted to stay to take in all the beautiful unusual colours and take photographs but also you wanted to leave because of the smells and I thought it could be quite dangerous some of the holes were deep and nearby really the ground looked like it might collapse

Through engaging with volcanic landscapes, all the senses are stimulated providing a special, vividly remembered embodied experience.

### 5.2.3 Walking Stimulating Reflexivity

The walking experiences of the women in this study concur with Edensor's (2000a: 102) notion that 'walking indeed can be particularly suitable for stimulating reflexivity'. Studies focusing on solo women travellers have previously indicated that travel space is of great importance in self-development, independence and empowerment (Elsrud, 1998; Gibson and Jordan, 1998b; Wilson and Little, 2008).

Within the travel space, walking space becomes an important feature for personal development. Some women chose to walk alone, and in doing so created time for themselves to think and reflect, and as a consequence perform an independent act and can gain power from the experience. Wylie (2005: 239) in particular emphasises that walking can be an interaction of self, others and nature and that walking alone allows 'a close visual, tactile and sonorous relationship with the earth, the ground, mud, stinging vegetation'. Quietness and solitude within a beautiful outdoor environment setting can, as Caulins, et al.,(2006) report, also increase awareness of the self. Emotional bonds with the landscape elements can develop as well as bodily pleasure derived from a sense of escape into peaceful surroundings. For example, Michelle aged 24 from Canada stated that:

walking in the wilderness alone strengthens the trust in yourself, as well as a boost to your self-confidence and self esteem, a much deeper inner learning; you can be at one with nature

Karin aged 39 from Switzerland adds:

To go into wilderness alone you have got to have a love of nature, it's a great feeling interacting with nature so different from everyday interactions emh, you find a kind of inner peace and hassle free time to think

Yvonne aged 37 from the Netherlands further commented that:

I had long beautiful walks on my own and loved it. You can walk for miles here without meeting anyone and still feel safe. I loved the time on my own and did a lot of thinking about what I wanted to change in my life

The women in this study walked alone primarily to have time to think, usually about themselves and their life predicaments. There seemed an appreciation of the powers of nature in giving them something to help them on their life journey. The opportunity to explore the inner self becomes a greater possibility whilst in a place of perceived freedom 'detaching the individual from their place in the social structure (and loosening) the moorings of their culturally constructed self' (Jarvis, 1997: 37). Edensor (2000a: 101) suggests that 'the sensual experiences of a walk in the country may linger due to the pace of travel and the relatively slow speed of things moving past'. Robertson et al., (2009: 10) note that 'walkers suggested that by walking in nature, they were involved in internal psychological and mental

healing'. The women in this study gave a similar impression and in addition seemed to find the beautiful peace and freedom very important elements of desire.

#### 5.2.4 Walking, Friendship and Sharing

Furthermore, Edensor (2000a: 9) has explored the merits of walking with a companion as a good means of strengthening and developing friendships and sharing landscape experiences and states that '[t]he walk is an occasion for sociability, where exercise is taken and countryside enjoyed in combination with convivial chatter and companionship'. He notes that it can disturb the harmony created between that of nature, that of the body and that of the mind and notes that 'others vouch for the delights of self-development, communing with 'nature' rather than people, the cultivation of self-reliance and contemplation, and the uninterrupted sensual experiences of nature' (Edensor, 2000a: 89) when walking alone. In this context, Le-Ester aged 67 from the United States commented that:

Aah, trees, water, birds, sunshine, ah, lack of wind, ahm, comfortable place to sit and walk and to eat. I like the outdoors; I'd like to have an outdoor space like that sharing it with likeminded people adds to the enjoyment. You tend to talk about everything and anything and yourself of course

Andrea aged 42 from Germany stated that:

It's more the physical strenuous activity and the, erm, what I'd like is that if, while you're walking see how the landscape is changing, and talk to others in the group

Laura aged 27 from England added:

I think that women want to have a look on the world, to discover, to learn, and understand themselves. They like to share good moments with people, see animals, and enjoy landscape, romantic full moon.....before getting bored in a kitchen for the rest of their life.

A few lesbian couples enjoyed the freedom of the outdoor space away from the ever present judgmental gaze of others in society. They were able to walk hand in hand with a partner, along a romantic beach or through atmospheric rainforest and gained the opportunity to "be ourselves" and "to

be free to be how we want to be with one another". The expanse of the New Zealand landscape gave the opportunity to go walking (tramping) for hours, even days on end, without encountering another human being, thus removing the pressures of social expectation.

Liz aged 58 from England stated that:

We enjoy our time together in the natural environment, we can totally relax together, it's lovely, we feel closer I think don't we?

Anne aged 55 from England replied:

Yes, wherever we travel we always make the effort to go on long walks and get away from it all, we really enjoy each other's company, where better to walk than the beautiful stunning areas of New Zealand, we like remote beaches and mountains, oh and natural forest areas, beaches seem to be quite romantic places to be with the one you love...

Romantic concepts of walking include the idea that particular aesthetic and mental stimulations are 'inseparable from the physical conditions of movement through space' (Leed, 1991: 72). For example,

Jill aged 57 from Australia noted that:

...when faced with natural elements, on exploration type travel experiences then the stress and strain of real life are put back into proportion'. When the weather changes you have to look after yourself, you become the most important issue, keeping, warm, dry preferably and safe...

### 5.3 WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Wildlife encounters form a part of what is often classed as 'nature-based or eco-tourism'. The viewing and visiting of wildlife for recreational purposes in the form of a tourist attraction is a rapidly growing, recent phenomenon (Orams, 1996; Hoyt, 2001; Newsome et al, 2005). Interactions may vary in form between viewing, observing and photographing the wildlife in their natural location. Wilson and Tisdell (2005) define two situations involving wildlife viewing, one where the tourist visits a national park or protected area to view wildlife in their natural environment and the more specifically focused viewing of

one species in its natural habitat. A wide range of wildlife tours and activities can be discovered in New Zealand. Pearce and Wilson (1995: 20) have previously examined wildlife-viewing tourists in New Zealand and found evidence suggesting that 'for people engaging in wildlife tourism in New Zealand this activity is only one activity of many'. Similarly in this study, the women participated in a wide range of activities, wildlife interaction being one of many.

When the women were questioned about their most memorable and enjoyable activities experienced in New Zealand swimming with dolphins and whale watching were often near the top of the list alongside tramping in and skydiving above, the natural environment. The findings in this study do suggest that wildlife encounters and adventure tourism activities appeared to provoke the most meaningful and enjoyable responses of all the tourism and leisure related activities and pastimes. It was the enthusiasm in the voices coupled with the non verbal gestures, and the in-depth descriptions which led the researcher to conclude that these were the activities that had greatest meaning to the women.

Pearce and Wilson's (1995: 23) results indicated that 'the natural attractions of New Zealand are especially important to British and European travellers who may have less opportunity at home for such wildlife experiences, particularly in contrast to Australians and North Americans' and the findings in this study concur with their findings. Women selected activities they were unable to pursue in their home country; in effect they were seeking the unusual. Interestingly, Wilson (1995: 22) found that 'the majority of whale watchers were FIT's' (Free Independent Travellers) as were the women in this study. Spectacular and charismatic species with particular aesthetic appeal such as movement, visibility, colour and shape tend to hold a greater attraction to wildlife tourists (Tremblay, 2002); dolphins and whales in particular appear to possess those appealing attributes. However, one problem for tourists in

the marine environment is the variable weather and sea conditions which can trigger sea sickness, potentially marring the experience.

The women in this study visited many wildlife sites in New Zealand, some were guided or staged performances, others were self researched and self guided. Apart from a Kiwi reserve inland and the many New Zealand sheep and the deer farms observed in the countryside as the women passed through on their journey, the majority of encounters with New Zealand's wildlife were around the coast, along beaches or actually on or in the southern ocean. 'Wildlife viewing in New Zealand is primarily centred on either marine mammals or native birds' (Pearce and Wilson, 1995: 19). For example, Nikki aged 23 from Australia reflected on her itinerary:

...probably the highlight was its wildlife, aah, I forgot to say, I did go on a tour. I went to see Dunedin, erm, at the Peninsula. I went to see the dolphin, er not the dolphins, the seals and the penguins and everything on an eco tour. It was a fantastic experience they were just there in the wild on the beaches, it gave you such a, a special feeling, how can I say personal to me...

Marcela aged 18 from Columbia added:

Ah, we saw the yellow penguins. It was amazing they were waddling around there was some babies as well. We saw seals and some sea lions, yeah, that was amazing seeing wildlife in the natural habitat, ya, was very cool...

Karin aged 26 from the United States also added that:

We didn't actually get to see the penguins, no, we went looking for them but we saw a whole lot of sea lions and nearly got attacked by them, ha, ha, well my friend took a different route and she took the route going on the north part of the cliff and, yeah, she came round a bend and it turned out that there was a cave right there so she nearly got knocked off the cliff ha, ha, a sea lion jumped out of the cave, ahh scary. Then we met down on the beach and there were like six sea lions 'arr, arring' like, they're quick, surprisingly quick, you could get pretty close really quite close if you dare though to take photos. We won't forget that encounter.

The depth of feeling generated by the various encounters the women had with wildlife is demonstrated by the use of strong descriptive words such as '*amazing*,' *fantastic*, '*cool*' and '*personal*'. The above

quote demonstrates, incidental contact may also occur when visitors, engaged in observing one species, may incidentally come into contact with other species (Wilson and Tisdell, 2001), a further example of incidental contact is that dusky dolphins are often spotted in large numbers at Kaikoura on regular whale watching trips as well as the odd albatross.

### 5.3.1 Whale and Dolphin Encounters

New Zealand's tourism industry maintains viewing platforms, hides and educational information boards at many locations, such as those at Omaru. These give tourists the opportunity to observe and be educated about yellow eyed penguins as they returned from daily sea trips at dusk to their nesting sites on cliff near the shore. In addition the penguins gain some protection as the tourists are contained in a specific area giving the penguins and other wildlife space to perform their natural behaviour.

Karin aged 26 from the United States commented:

The penguins, we went to see the yellow penguins at Omaru coz you can sit, erm, they've built a like a platform where you can go and sit and wait for them yeah, there were tiny little, they were only about this big. It's the way they just sort of flick out of the water and then and they were in little like trains of penguins, one behind the other like going in a procession up the hill. Ah I love penguins seeing them waddling up and it was a real big struggle for them to get up to their nests you felt like you wanted to go and pick it up and help, they're so cute, ha, ha.

Penguins were a popular creature that women were drawn to on their journey, again similar to dolphins in that they are regarded or perceives as being 'cute' and 'cuddly', this may be from popular literature, children's films, animation and television portrayal of them and their use as objects on which to model children's toys.

As New Zealand's tourism industry has developed, so has the town of Kaikoura; it now boasts both dolphin and seal swimming/snorkelling trips as well as whale watching by cruise boat or helicopter.

Marketing focuses on getting 'up close' to whales and Whale Watch Kaikoura advertises 'come face to face with this magnificent creature in its natural environment' Orams (2000: 562). Dolphin and whale watching interactions can involve organized shore based viewing, sea vessel tours, aerial viewing by plane or helicopter as well as swimming or feeding dolphins. In this case some women chose to actively swim or 'perform' alongside the wildlife, whilst other women chose to view or 'gaze' from a distance on land or from a boat deck or for a limited few who could afford to fund an aerial pursuit.

Whale-watching is a growth industry worldwide and has enjoyed phenomenal growth as a tourism activity over the past two decades (Duffus, 1996; Orams, 1997; Hoyt, 2000). The majority of whale-watch tourists are from Western countries (Hoyt, 2001) and hold Western environmental values (Hinch, 2001). Humpback whales and southern right whales in particular are observed from the shoreline in New Zealand, from vessels and aircraft in many locations (Birtles et al., 2001). Duffus and Dearden (1990) suggest that humpback whales afford recognition as a result of being used as a symbol of conservation. Orams (2000: 561) maintains that 'whale watching is not simply getting close to whale, many other variables are important influencing customer enjoyment; the design of the boat, the positioning of the boat for viewing, number of passengers on board, trip duration and commentary given in relation to whales and other attractions'. However, in this study three respondents reported negative factors affecting their enjoyment of whale-watching:

too many people in the water with the dolphins;

the boat operators at Kaikoura weren't very helpful in helping rearrange a cancelled trip, they seemed very distant from the customer you got the feeling you were just a financial object not a customer with genuine feeling, they didn't seem to grasp how disappointed I was to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity;

being sea sick really spoiled my whale watching experience I couldn't wait to get back on terra firma.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of women were very positive in their accounts of whale sightings and interactions. Embodied experiences left the women with more than just an interaction with wildlife but an interaction with the environment and other passengers. The word use in the following quotes emphasis the 'special moments' experienced by the women; the encounter inducing a 'warm feeling inside', 'a special quite calm'; triggering a physical response 'hair on the back of the neck standing up' and helped achieve a state and inner feeling of 'calm' and 'peacefulness'.

Anne aged 55 from England stated that:

Two, we saw two whales and hundreds of hectors dolphins, and a few albatrosses, we saw them swimming they like come up, take a breath, the fountain they er, make and then, go diving. Yeah, looks great. It is fantastic, you should do that. They are such powerful creatures but graceful too. It made the hairs stand on the back of your neck seeing such a great creature close up, what a privileged I had to pinch myself and wondered am I dreaming or is this real? You felt like you didn't know where to look surrounded by action, the dolphins were following us jumping out of the water and splashing back down just playing and having fun...

Lee-Ester aged 67 from the United States commented that:

it's hard to describe how you feel when you see a whale in the wild, it's so different yeah to the nature programs, being there in the moment with such a magnificent creature is just awesome, yeah awesome, a moment you will always remember just special, quite calm, like an peace inside just very very special. Ah and I got some great photos to help me remember...

Anne aged 29 from Germany described her experiences as follows:

...the sea was really choppy and I was worried about being sick but at the same time excited to go searching for a whale. We hadn't been going long when the captain announced he had spotted one in the distance. You could feel the excitement on the boat and the kids near me were at the front looking out in anticipation, it must have been even better for them. We could just see a spout of water above the sea and every now and then a bit of black in the water. When we got near the captain said he had to turn the engines off so not to disturb the whale and we had to watch from this distance. We were so lucky the whale swam quite close to us, its fin sticking up out of the water, then it turned on its side a bit it was more white underneath it made you feel so excited I'm sure my heart was beating faster and like a warm feeling inside,

being close to nature awh, fantastic it was like it was turning to look at us as we were looking at it awe just superb. But then it quickly left, its massive tail came out of the water not far from us it was massive and then it dived down and disappeared I thought it would splash but it was so gentle and peaceful. I didn't want it to go away but I felt a bit seasick by then so it was good to go and sit down, once the boat was moving it wasn't as rocky in the water and I kept looking intensely at the water in case it can back up...

Michelle aged 24 from Canada excitedly commented that:

...we saw two whales in the distance but then on the way back we got really close to one, the engines were turned off everyone was really really quiet, just the wind in your ears making a noise, it was like a tension in the air, but then we got closer and you could hear cameras clicking everywhere. I took loads emh the man with the microphone told us that we (the boat) had to stay back so we don't cross into the whales path and scare it away, it turned on its side and he said it was slapping the water with one of its side fins, oh I can't remember why now but it looked like it was waving, it was a humpback he said probably heading to Australia to breed, it was absolutely fantastic, yeah one of my best memories of New Zealand...

Orams (2000: 3) has noted that while 'increasing amounts of work have been directed at understanding the impacts of whale watching on whales, little effort has been directed at the impacts of whale watching on the watchers themselves'. This study can provide a limited amount of evidence to fulfill this observation that 'few significant studies on the characteristics, motivations, attitudes and behaviour of whale watchers have been conducted' (Orams, 2000: 3). The visual sense was of great importance to the wildlife encounters but the women also pointed out other sensual responses or embodied experiences such as 'the sound of the wind in the ears', 'cameras clicking', 'the movement of the vessel' and even the 'tension in the air'.

### 5.3.2 Swimming with Dolphins

Several women also ventured into the water to actually swim with dolphins and on occasions with seals. A few women visited the famous Knight Islands off the north east coast of North Island and Marlborough Sound to snorkel and dive with dolphins and other tropical fish. The word of mouth advice

on the backpacker scene was to book these activities well ahead to save disappointment. The opportunity to swim with or watch the dusky dolphins can be an awe inspiring experience. 'Interacting with dolphins can have positive benefits for humans' (Smith et al., 2006: 119) however a greater volume of research has considered the negative impacts such as the potential of injury to dolphins by boat propellers (Samuels et al., 2003) and the disturbance of dolphin habitats and behaviour by the presence of tour vessels (Constantine, 1999; Nichols and Stone, 2001; Lusseau and Higman, 2005). The positive effects, according to Smith et al (2006: 118-119), of human/dolphin interaction include 'dolphins interacting with humans results in extremely positive feelings of enjoyment and connection with nature for humans' and 'tourists who receive educational material as part of their experience with dolphins improve their knowledge and experience about dolphins and marine issues'. Few studies have considered the meaning and subsequent feelings produced within tourists from such encounters, however. This study found that during dolphin viewing trips the women appeared to have a perception of the dolphin as a 'fun' creature, possessing an image of softness with peaceful attributes being assigned. There was a widespread desire to view dolphins in the wild as an ambition to be fulfilled:

Lee-Ester aged 67 from the United States reflected that:

...the boat trip down the bay to the pacific felt like being rocked into peace. Seeing the hectors dolphins playing so freely and joyfully was a gift. Visiting with people of like mind, compatible people and, that was really nice, I was very peaceful and, ahm, the boat was rocking it was like I was being lulled into a nice place, a peaceful place...

Anne aged 55 from England stated that:

...one of the best things was yeah the dolphins. The first time I saw dolphins, ahr it was amazing because, I didn't really expect it at that moment was on the Milford Sound cruise on the way back and I didn't knew that there are dolphins and then someone said through the microphone go on the left side there are dolphins, I was like 'no, no, it can't be true!'. I'm saying 'I've seen the dolphins' sort of run there and they are jumping out of the water and that was really, really exciting and great fun...

Lis aged 51 from Australia reflected:

...we went on a boat trip to Doubtful Sound and Crooked Arm. "Crooked Arm was the most important part of this trip. Here were the steep cliffs of granite. Just breath taking. We saw many blue-nosed dolphins. At the end of our stay here, the captain told everyone to go stand outside at the rail. 'Don't move. Don't talk, put all cameras away.' He shut off all motors and generators. It was incredibly quiet and peaceful. We could hear the water splash from the dolphins. We heard lots of bird songs. Tears welled up. I wished we could have stayed there much longer. The crew must be spiritual or very in touch with nature - probably both...

Emotionally charged moments can be stimulated by the interaction of humans and wildlife particularly in their own natural habitats. Richardson and Fluker (2004: 5) consider tourism experiences with dolphins through a four quadrant model, with 'physical' and 'interpersonal' contact experienced in 'tangible' and 'intangible' forms, but make no gender distinctions. This study focused upon the physical and interpersonal intangible elements experienced by the women. Physically, the aesthetic conditions of the environment, the setting of a clean, pristine natural environment, with a blue sea with a mountainous backdrop created a framework or atmosphere in which to observe or swim with dolphins. The experience of the actual interaction with the dolphins was either visual or an embodied interaction. The interpersonal intangible elements of importance to the women were sharing the experience with other likeminded tourists with a love of nature and the interactions with tourist guides to gain enjoyment as well as knowledge. Interestingly, none of the women mentioned the potential negative impacts of their own behaviour on the creatures they were interacting with and when questioned about their whale watching or dolphin swimming experience dwelt only with their personal feelings and experiences. The following quotes give an insight into the women in this studies interpretation of swimming with dolphins.

Laura aged 27 from England reflected on her interaction with dolphins thus:

Yeah, oh it was amazing we were up at half 5 and I thought what on earth am I doing had to be there in the cold water at half 5 in the morning, but erm it was, it was really weird coz I'm a confident swimmer if I know what's underneath. it's like a really big ledge like a gulley underneath the sea where they get all the dolphins and then you jump off the boat and you think oh my god I'm not alone here, clearly I'm not alone, ha ha. And then you're sort of swimming around and all of a sudden this dolphin like swims past you and you're sort of like hughh. So I was a bit shocked and the first 20 minutes I think, you know it was all taking in that

how big they are and that they're actually really wild and then you start making your silly noises so they come and attract to you. then I got a little bit more confident and started swimming to the surface with them and holding their eye contact and they actually swim with you surfing with you, so it's really really, it's just amazing to think, you know, they're really intelligent and er, they can make these noises and play about and it was really cool, a fantastic really moving experience...

Katie aged 23 from England added:

...a highlight of my trip was erm, seeing the dolphins swimming in Kaikoura well when we were in the water there was about 300 dolphins and to attract the dolphins you have to kind of sing and stuff so all the people were singing which was really funny but it was really, really cool and its really exciting to see so many dolphins and they were so close about a foot away...

Anne aged 29 from Germany also added:

...the first time you go into the water you just think about what do I have to do, erm, how do I have to act that the dolphins, yeah, get interest in you and, yeah, took me too much time to, erm, find myself or the way I want to behave in the water and then we all were told to get out of the water again and we went into the water for four times and just at the last time I had the feeling that I do kind of communicate with the dolphins and that was pretty cool, I really liked it but it was too short. Once, once I've had eye contact with them and, after other people told me you can have quite long eye contact and they're really interested in the person you get the feeling that they really play with you. Before I had the feeling they just swim and they, they are interested in what's happening there, they are not interested in me as a person. And at the last time we spent on the water, had the feeling that they, like, they are interested in me and they want to play with me and that was quite nice, I didn't touch them because they told us not to do it. I think they want to see what happens and they like to swim in a circle. If you do swim in a circle they just follow you and make some rounds with you which is quite funny, yeah like your becoming part of their life or their world I mean.

The dolphin swimming encounters tended to begin with a sense of fear and nervousness, a state of self questioning as to how to act or behave in their presence. Moving from 'a known space' that of land and human contact to 'an unknown space' that of sea and dolphin contact provided a challenge in itself. Such a physical act draws upon internal strength and determination to perform and succeed. The women were moving within a very short space of time from the familiar close physical cocoon of normal life to the very unfamiliar, cold, wet environment with no know boundaries or protection. Once over the initial shock of the watery environment and the presence of wild creatures, the women gained in confidence which allowed them to relax and to enjoy and absorb theses special intrinsic emotional

rewards. Such emotions are associated with flow, an 'optimal psychological state' (Jackson and Marsh, 1996: 18) that builds up throughout activity participation. Flow is 'the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992: 4). Activities that generate flow require the setting of goals, demand skill, challenge, enhanced concentration, a sense of control and total immersion in the activity. Flow is experienced only when activity participation is voluntary, participants feel in harmony with their environment, and their skills match the challenges presented (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). 'Such intense, emotional and cognitive aspects of participation have been referred to as mystical moments, greatest moments, peak moments and magic moments' (Lipscombe, 1999: 269).

The perception of dolphins is that of cute, playful and fun animals. They have an image in the western world created partly by zoo performances, they are able to be trained to perform and they generally respond positively to human beings. This fact in itself may have given the women confidence to actually get into the water. In addition, such a positive image of dolphins helps tourist's story telling back home, as it is generally assumed that swimming with dolphins is a special desirable and interesting activity to perform.

#### 5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has addressed the women traveller's environmental interactions, adventure experiences and embodied encounters in New Zealand. Adventure activities, both extreme and soft, are a major part of New Zealand's tourism industry, often marketed as the 'Adventure Capital of the World'. Across the age ranges there was great interest and enthusiasm for the types of adventure activities once associated with masculinity and the more extreme sports appeal especially to the younger women.

Skydiving, bungee jumping and heli-hiking were popular as were the softer activities of tramping, whale watching and dolphin swimming. Word of mouth recommendations were important aspects of activity scheduling and company choice. Females performing were a noticeable part of advertising material I collected and I observed that risk, or perceived risk, was an important element for the women and they were challenged outside their normal comfort zones. Successfully completing challenges and negotiating risk led to positive benefits, such as self actualization, self confidence and belief, and the development of stories which reinforced an adventurous identity. Emotional responses to the scenery of New Zealand and to that of performing some of the activities was evident in the women's narrative and their enthusiastic responses when being interviewed. The women's descriptions contained reference to a combination of senses, through which they experienced the environment and their activities. Tramping experiences in New Zealand by the women travellers were wide and varied. The benefits of the various walking experiences were explored; it can be viewed as a means of escape, especially from urban environments; a place of beauty and relaxation; a place for reflexivity and self awareness. Wildlife encounters and interactions were discussed with the women, again New Zealand provided a great array of experiences: viewing yellow eyed penguins and albatross, sea lions, whales, dolphins, seals in the wild or seeing the endangered Kiwi's in special enclosures. These encounters were very special and meaningful to the women; whale and dolphin watching and swimming with dolphins were explored in greater detail, with descriptive narratives giving an insight into the importance of such interactions to the women travellers.

## CHAPTER 6: WOMEN TRAVELLERS' VISUAL CONSUMPTION OF NEW ZEALAND'S LANDSCAPES

### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the visual consumption of the New Zealand landscape by the women travellers. They were initially questioned during the interviews conducted about whether New Zealand lived up to the image that had been created in their imaginations prior to travelling and, as will be demonstrated, on the whole the findings suggest that New Zealand exceeded their expectations. The construction of place image in the mind of a potential traveller is still not fully understood as it involves the complex interaction of a variety of factors. Jenkins (1999: 3) provides a chart based on Stabler's (1988) ideas; in essence an individual's perception, psychological and socio-economic characteristics, experiences, motivations as well as the effects of hearsay, advertising and education can affect the image formation. The post-modern tourist has an opportunity to travel, to photograph and to develop their own image of place and self through their individual travel experiences.

Firstly, the general role of tourist photography is considered and more specifically explored through the women's narratives on the importance of their own photographic behaviours. Photographs are seen as a memory aid, a record of achievement, a means of social communication and at times a hindrance or distraction to their enjoyment of the moment. Secondly, the idea of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990a), and the visual consumption of landscape is explored. The 'female gaze' experienced in New Zealand is represented by verbal responses and descriptions of the landscapes consumed and is accompanied by a diverse set of meaningful photographs. The idea that tourists perform photography through their bodies by crouching down to get a better angle, climbing to the top of the hill and by giving their cameras to a fellow traveller so as to perform in front of the camera are also important. Kinaesthetic

movement is required to take and perform a group shot for example, travellers with arms around each other, organising themselves into different stances ready for the photographic moment. The performances of 'being a tourist' was captured at specific moments on the camera, constructing a collage of tourist experiences. Finally, the visual representation of New Zealand is considered in the analysis of the women's own photographs. On the whole the photographs were well composed, in focus and generally clear in their intent. The selection of photographs presented to the researcher for analysis contained the stereotypical famous landmark that a country has to offer; in this case the natural environment of New Zealand. Photographic narrative of the self and the travel experience painted a picture of enjoyment, challenge, fun, and socially important engagement. Photographs are included to provide evidence from the women's own collections. The photographs are explored through three themes that emerged during the analysis: landscape and wildlife; landscape, self and activity; and social and cultural representations. Quotes and relationships to previous research helped me explore the meaning of these women's travel photographs. It is argued that both the 'tourist gaze' and related 'embodied performances' serve to create memories and social tools to further self-development.

## 6.1 TOURISTS' PHOTOGRAPHY

Although 'tourism and photography are modern twins' (Baerenholdt et al., 2004: 69), 'we have virtually no knowledge of why and how tourists produce photographic images' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 23). Travel and photography go hand in hand, so much so that Sontag (1977: 9) suggested that 'travel is a strategy for the accumulation of photographs'. Moreover, '[p]hotography gives shape to travel so that the journeys consist of one 'good view' to capture on film to a series of others' (Urry, 1997: 129). Urry continues by saying that, in effect, the camera is responsible for 'turning nature and society into graspable objects just as photography turns women into materialistic objects on a page or video' (Urry, 1997: 129). Hence, '[p]hotography is thus part of the process by which subjectivities are formed; it is

interconnected in many ways with people's hopes, fears, memories, activities, likes and loves, and so on' (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997: 195).

Crouch (1999) emphasises the sociability, creativity and embodiment of tourist photography and Baerenholdt et al (2004: 69) use performance metaphors, 'stage, script, director, acting and so on – can help us write illuminating and dynamic accounts of tourist photography as an embodied and creative performance 'full of life' that produces memories, social relations and places'. These ideas are used in this chapter to emphasise the holistic and complex interactions associated with travel photography. The very act of taking the photograph involves personal decision making and physically acting out that decision; what photograph should I take, where shall I take it from, from what angle, shall I wait until those other tourists have moved out of view, shall I bend down to get a different/better angle, shall I have a subject in the foreground, or just a scenic landscape shot. The answers to these questions differ depending upon, the level of skill of the person, their standard of requirements, the time available to compose a photograph, and the intention of the camera user. Secondly, there are decisions about directing subjects to the required position, coordinating a group shot or asking another person to temporarily move out of the shot, achieving the correct balance frame. Posing for the camera is yet another act of performance and often results in exaggerated movements such as star jumps, waving, open stances or smiles often triggered by the takers verbal cue of 'smile please', or 'say cheese'. In essence the 'tourist gaze' is extended, readjusted and captured and in effect 'the photograph corporatizes the 'tourist gaze': its transforms consuming, distanced spectators into active directors and actors who constantly produce new 'realities'' (Baerenholdt et al., 2004: 70). The creativity of the traveller in producing photographs is evident on the return home when photographs are selected, edited, manipulated to produce an acceptable visual display to present to others, whether it be in traditional album form, as a computer slide show or as a verbal commentary with photographic

evidence, whereby the photograph triggers the taker's memories and the meaning and stories behind the photograph are projected or acted out.

Post modern tourist locations are littered with view points, photographic platforms and coach tour stop off areas all existing due to the presumption that photographs should be taken here. 'These places are constructed as photographic hotspots and it can feel almost a social crime if a tourist does not conform to the expectation. 'However the ability to select images to photograph provides tourists with a degree of control over the tangible evidence they bring back from their experiences' (Markwell, 1997: 132). The journey by the traveller can in fact be crafted into the 'perfect experience' with the selective sampling of photographs, again giving control to the image maker and help to construct a unique individual story. Horne (1992: 112), meanwhile, comments that 'it is the camera that invented most of the sights we (as tourists) were expected to see' and the images produced are 'miniature slices of reality' (Urry, 1997: 127). Moreover, some tourists have a need to replicate photographs they have seen in advertising brochures (Albers and James, 1988). This chapter thus aims to consider the 'female tourist gaze' in New Zealand from the photographic evidence from women travellers.

#### 6.1.1 Photography and Women Travellers in New Zealand

'It is almost unthinkable to travel for pleasure without bringing the lightweight camera along and returning home with many snapshot memories' (Baerenholdt et al., 2004: 69). Edensor's (1998) study of the photography of the Taj Mahal, suggests that many travellers only experience a place through the lens of a camera. In this study the women also talked about their photographic behaviour and the potential interference it can generate with regard to 'taking in the sight' but although there was an awareness of this fact, the overpowering need and desire to photograph a site took precedence. All the women had small digital cameras. Without exception the women were enthusiastic, sometimes

extremely enthusiastic, about taking photographs and most were planning to organise them into some accessible form, either physical traditional albums or using computer software to construct a pictorial representation of their journey to show other people. Indeed, '[m]ost regard tourist photography as a pleasure rather than a burden, as integral to pleasurable and memorable sightseeing' (Baerenholdt et al., 2004: 81). Some were using photographic images as a form of diary, others used images as an aid to memory for writing a journal at a later date, and others talked of the inner enjoyment of revisiting places and feelings and emotions evoked from the still image. Markwell (1997: 131) goes on to suggest 'that the act of taking a photograph may itself be an important social activity for the tourist serving to strengthen bonds among fellow travellers'. On many occasions I observed travellers both in hostel common rooms and on public transport sharing their photographs either via the small screen on the digital camera, on the computers available in the hostels or sometimes they would appear with copies to share and discuss with fellow travellers. Through conversation, images provoked deeper thoughts and memories and moved well beyond their two dimensional status, becoming interwoven with life and intricate meanings. They were also used to assist other travellers in constructing their itinerary 'not a word of mouth' but an 'image stimulus' used as a recommendation of a place to visit. Images were also used to authenticate experiences, 'so that the act of taking a photograph or buying a picture postcard on holiday effectively serves to represent and signal the genuineness of the touristic experience' (Sontag, 1979: 9) encouraging others to repeat the act.

In the past, both travel and photography were male preserves, but some women now have the freedom to perform both, but little evidence to date appears to represent the merging of the two entities from a female perspective. Harper (2000: 728) points out that 'the social construction of photographs is a matter of gender' basing this statement on a comparative study of male and female photographic representations. He continues to point out that the role of gender in creating photographic meaning is yet another largely unexplored area. Some research, however, has been conducted into photography's

role in the advertising and marketing of tourism destinations and it has been found to be biased towards the masculine gaze. Bikini clad, shapely women on a pristine beach, adventure sports featuring the male adventurer performing, target the male eye and male pleasures. This chapter thus introduces women's ways of performing into the academic discussion on tourist vision and photography. Following the perspective of Larsen (2005: 417) 'rather than making an unproductive dualism between representations and non-representational, as some performance theorists are prone to, I outline an approach to performance that can accommodate Urry's (1990, 2002) notion of the 'tourist gaze', which draws attention to the "choreographed" nature of vision in tourism'. Hence, this chapter attempts to identify the importance of photographic evidence to the women on their journeys in New Zealand, in an effort to contribute to the development of a greater understanding of dimensions of photography in a tourism experience.

#### 6.1.2 Photographs as Memory Aid

Firstly, photographs were seen as an extension of memory, a personal prompt to be used in the future to help relive and communicate certain encounters and experiences:

Emily aged 25 from Germany:

...as a sort of memory, they provide memories of my trip because I make at least 30 photographs a day because of I've a digital camera and I download it on my notebook, erm, every third day and so this is also a reason why I don't write because I rather take pictures of, erm, well that I, in the end I know where I've been and I can make special album back my house...

Heather aged 23 from the United States:

Ahm, I love going home and kinda like re-living everything that I've done. Like I have my memories and that'll be great and the, the pictures jog the memory too, like a trigger to your memory...

The photographs were a very important feature of the women's travel and in addition to Markwell's (1997) observations they are a potential trigger for personal reflection and identity development on return home. Images produced could even be described as 'calculated memory' (Haldrup and Larsen,

2003:32). Barthes (2000) work strongly suggests that photographic images have got great future meaning, as they are “full of life” and are able to keep memories alive; even after death. Photographs were also seen by the women as a personal record of achievement.

### 6.1.3 Photographs as Records of Achievement

A number of extreme adventure activity providers produce photographers for the participant with souvenir photographs or video of their experiences (when Skydiving or Bungee Jumping) being available before they leave as an added bonus and a memento, of their experiences. The role of tourism photography as a souvenir ‘has become pervasive amongst attractions and tours with many wildlife parks, adventure activities (e.g. skydiving, bungee jumping, or horse riding) and tours to the reef and rainforest employing professional photographers to capture the tourist’s holiday experience during their visit’ (Coglan and Prideaux, 2008: 2). To a certain extent this confirms the importance of personal achievement being captured photographically and the increased economic benefits to the provider. On other occasions participants were well organise in advance of the experience and gave their own camera to either a fellow participant or an onlooker so that the special activity they were performing was captured for their own purposes.

Heather aged 23 from the United States:

...I went down that waterfall, coz yeah we’re proud of em coz there was this camera person on the, ahm, they were on the banks of the river when we were white water rafting so they got all the pictures of us going down the, ahm, the waterfall so that will be fun to show everyone...

Susan aged 37 from England:

...I bought a photograph from the company I went skydiving with its great to show people me skydiving; shall I go and get it for you?

#### 6.1.4 Photographs to Share

In this study, photographs clearly validated performance as well as providing a medium for reflective thought to follow. At times travellers constructed photographs to present them in a particular light and to build a satisfactory life story, a personal narrative. An image of participating in adventurous activities, as above, for example, could enhance their status or identity as one of being 'adventurous', 'brave' or 'daring'. Perhaps developing a more powerful image or the stronger image of the individual in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, after performing such activities. Photographs were also seen as a means of communication with important social networks back home and were to be shared with others. The social role of photography has been previously investigated by Bourdieu (1990) who demonstrated photography's use at important occasions and events, and its role in social integration and family membership, all of which can be related to touristic situations. Thus, for example,

Simone aged 27 from Germany stated that:

...I mean, I think I'm quite a visual person so although I could explain it verbally I get more satisfaction of saying look "that's what it looked like" you know because in my head that's what I see you see so I'd like other people to share that, especially my family. So, yeah, I take loads of pictures and, erm, end up with loads, I've got loads of photographs at home I need to organise, I've got a big box of them..

Sarah aged 26 from England added:

Erm, yeah keeping in touch by email is cool, erm, and also, because I'm quite proud of myself to do this, I've got, I'm uploading photos., I prefer to have a digital camera so, uploading some pictures onto like a Flickr thing and then I can, when I do my emails I can like say have a look at my pictures to em my friends and family back home...

Many participants emailed photographs back home on a regular basis during their journey in an attempt to share their lived and embodied experiences and perhaps a way of immediately sharing personal achievements, successes and even changing identities. One participant encouraged me to follow or share the rest of her journey by accessing her personal blog as she was very proud of it and had a

strong desire to share her experiences with as many people as she could. She also told me she liked receiving comments back from people who viewed her photographs. Using the internet opens up destinations to many more potential travellers and has in a way become 'a form of digital word-of-mouth for the distribution of positive recommendations and disappointments' (Coghlan and Prideaux, 2008: 15).

#### 6.1.5 Photography Questioned

One important issue discussed by some of the women was the importance of stopping themselves taking too many photographs in order to allow them to actually absorb elements of the moment. The camera in some cases became a barrier which distanced the photographer from the experience creating a situation where they became an observer as opposed to a participant, removed from the reality of the moment. Bourdieu (1990: 68) observes that 'forgetting to look at what they are photographing, they travel without seeing and never know what their cameras are producing for them'. This is often true on tours where the traveller is given a limited amount of time to jump off the bus to photograph the all important scene. There is often little time to think about photographic technicalities, actually take a few photographs and absorb the scene in a relaxed manner. Holland (1991: 7) points out that 'people display a profound need for producing correct images, as if the audience was composed of judging strangers'. Other woman questioned the value of taking so many photographs, and also questioned whether photographs are of meaning to anyone else.

Liz aged 51 from Australia:

Sometimes I don't know why I take so many photographs. I question myself, I'm standing there taking photographs and saying, but why are you doing this? Already taken three of that same scene, but I still take more maybe to get the best possible view like the one I saw in the book. But also I need the photos, erm; I like to look at the photos afterwards. So I think erm, it's not only, a photo cannot, it's really nice but it cannot capture the impression that I have in this moment. The emotions are not on the photo, but I can make, if I am at home and I look at the photo, then I can imagine the emotions in me. From this moment it's easier, I think, but it's also

possible, without photo to imagine the emotions...

Lee-Ester aged 67 from the United States:

I have, I have taken much fewer photographs on this trip than ever before and the reason for that is coz about a year and a half ago when I retired, sold my house and got light. I found I had two huge, huge boxes of photographs that I took and stored and never looked at again and I thought 'this is ridiculous, I don't need to do anymore of this' so I kept the family heritage ancestry photos and, erm, threw away a lot of them because my kids don't care who my friends were and they're not going to know who they are here, they won't be meaningful to them, so I threw them all...

Nikki aged 23 from Australia:

Ahh, scenic of views or towns. Actually I have in my head I'm taking photos to show my boyfriend so I can explain things to him erm, I find myself doing that a lot which I think oh why do that just let him come and check it out for himself...

The following section analyses the women's own photographs, in an attempt to understand the meaning of photographs to women travellers. It also demonstrates both the visual and embodied nature of taking and performing photography.

## 6.2 AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN TRAVELLER'S PHOTOGRAPHS

In this section, I analyse the women travellers own photographic images empirically and the meanings and desires they attach to such productions. All but one of the interviewees possessed a small digital camera and all were actively recording their journey through photographic imagery. The photographs taken by the participants during their visit to New Zealand were collected at a later date via email. I requested a few meaningful photographs and some text to accompany the images to provide clues about what the photographer was trying to communicate with the images, and what meaning was being

attributed to the symbolic systems contained within the submitted photographs. I then used qualitative analysis; composition, content and semiology as it was felt that they were best suited to the photographs along with the accompanying narrative, to extract any meaningful evidence exploring issues of self and identity.

It was found that the visual dimension of the human senses was important to the women in several areas: visual representations of New Zealand were important pull factors in initial destination choice; the visual scenes of New Zealand's landscapes were of psychological importance to the women, creating an atmosphere in which to self-reflect; and, creating their own visual representations of New Zealand in the form of photographs was an important means to assist in creating memories and in providing a record of achievement to convey to people back home. A central objective of this study was to attempt to understand the meaning to the women traveller's of the photographs they themselves took in New Zealand, with the intention of adding a further dimension to understanding their overall experiences as individuals.

The photographic content was both spatial and temporal. The photographs depicted "places", "moments", "people", "culture" and "objects". Photographs of iconic New Zealand landscapes were taken from purpose built viewing platforms or other vantage points capturing the full scene. The composition was predominantly from eye level with a wide angle or 'landscape' mode perspective with relatively few self-portraits in 'portrait' mode on the camera. The landscape views were uncluttered by the omission of other tourists, suggesting that the photographers were patient and waited for other tourists to vacate the scene. Only four photographs showed night time scenes, most captured good, often sunny weather conditions. Generally speaking the photographs were well composed suggesting that either the traveller may have taken a great deal of time or was fairly experienced. The semiological

analysis provided photographs of sights and local culture and as well as photographs that captured personal experiences and humour.

In total fifty two photographs were provided from the participants by email and were printed out on photographic paper. The photographs were easily sectioned into three thematic areas;

1. 'Landscapes and wildlife' (19 photographs),
2. 'Landscape, self and activity' (18 photographs),
3. 'Social and cultural representations' (15 photographs)

#### 6.2.1 Theme 1: Landscapes and wildlife photographs



Figure 6.1 White Island Volcanoe



Figure 6.2 Lake Matterson



Figure 6.3 Hector's Dolphins

The 'Landscapes and wildlife' photographs were sub divided again into; lakes and mountains (9), seascapes (4) and landscapes with wildlife (6). Of the total number (7) were easily recognisable iconic (postcard type) views of New Zealand: Mount Cook, Queenstown, Tongariro National Park, Kaikoura, Punakaiki, Lake Matterson and the Kauri Tree named Tane Mahuta. The metaphor of the '**hermeneutic circle**' is used to illustrate the choreographed nature of actual photographic sightseeing (Urry, 2002:

129) which basically suggests that 'people travel to see and photograph what they have already consumed in image from' (Larsen, 2005: 423). Six other photographs, showed New Zealand wildlife in the foreground: sheep, penguins, seals, flowers, cattle and the horses. Landscape photographs accounted for over 30% of the total number of images provided, very much in line with over a quarter in Haldrup and Larsen's (2003) study and 35% in Markwell's (1997) study.

The scenic photographs the women produced including the examples above (Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3) reflected professional photographers advertising images in that they romanticized New Zealand, the photographs were stripped of signs of modernity and bad weather, reinforcing the image of New Zealand being '100% natural'. Travellers anticipated images from those already viewed in advertising materials and many lived out the desire to photograph and capture for themselves key icons. As such, 'photographing concretises experience and confirms the existence of anticipated place characteristics' (Scarles, 2009: 480).



Figure 6.4 Anna – Akaroa



Figure 6.5 Liz - Kepler Track



Figure 6.6 Farrah- Sunset

Anna (aged 29 from Germany) provided the photograph of a landscape scene at Akaroa, South Island (Figure 6.4). She stated that:

I chose this photograph because to me it shows the beauty and tranquillity of New Zealand, I can still remember the peacefulness and silence I experienced whilst standing at the place I took this photograph. It brings back good memories.

Anna's photograph was typical of many provided by the participants, it is landscape as opposed to portrait and shows a wide angled view of a sunny, unspoilt view of New Zealand's natural environment, reinforcing its image to others around the world who will perhaps view this photograph in Anna's album. This type of photograph is representative of the 'romantic gaze' which generates a desire for untouched scenery and solitary viewing so that it can realize pleasing images' (Baerenholdt et al 2004: 84). Anna was one of many women who commented on the diversity of landscapes available to capture on camera in New Zealand which led to a large number of photographs being taken and to the difficulty in selecting favourite photographs to send on to me.

Figure 6.5, shows a Liz's photograph on the Kepler Track (a famous walking trail) near Te Anau – South Island. Liz (aged 51 from Australia) stated that:

I selected this photograph because I like bush walking and on this bit of the track it so different to our bush at home. This is rain forest which we don't get near Perth in Western Australia.

This photograph illustrates the importance of photographing images that show difference to regular views in normal life.

Farah's (aged 27 from the United States) photograph of a sunset over a southern lake (figure 7.6) provided her with a:

...stunningly beautiful image, of a lake whos name I have unfortunately forgotten, but the colours were superb, it was a very still, quiet evening. I loved the view; it was like sitting in a Monet painting. It was such a quiet and peaceful town. It was particularly special because I shared this view with two other people I had met at the hostel. We talked about how lucky we were to be travelling and experiencing moments like this. Being in such a place seems to calm you and you are more open to talking about your feelings and the photograph brings back those special thoughts. I suppose it makes you reflect on your own life and what is important..

The outdoor nature and beauty of the New Zealand landscape is captured in such photographs and reinforces the original perceived image of the country. Additionally, as the three selected photographs demonstrate: 'photography aids comprehension of the immersion of self in the landscape' (Scarles,

2009: 474). For example, Anna's photograph is an attempt to capture 'the beauty and tranquillity of New Zealand; and Farah suggests that the view that she captured 'was like sitting in a Monet painting'. Thus the women tourists selectively produce place, their bodily interaction with place creates emotion, mood and/or sensual intensity, promoting the need to 'capture that moment in place', for themselves, on camera. Each moment or encounter that is photographed serves to 'facilitate the realization of self in place and extends the moment of encounter into another space and time' (Scarles, 2009: 482).

### 6.2.2 Theme 2: Landscape, self and activities



Figure 6.7 Campervan South Island



Figure 6.8 Kiwi statue



Figure 6.9 Unknown Waterfall

The 'Landscape, self and activities' photographs all showed a smiling subject posed in the foreground of a scenic view (see examples above). Seven of the eleven photographs showed the subject central to the view, whereas in the rest the subject was to the side opening the landscape up for the viewer to see the scene as well. The images were of a range of landscapes: glaciers, waterfalls, green scenery, beaches, lakes, mangrove forest and the Moraki boulders (unexplained spherical geological boulders embedded in the sand on a southern beach). Obviously, another traveller took the shot of the participant so its composition could be a result of their photographic experience. The performed body poses portrayed the joy and pride of 'being there' in New Zealand in what were predominantly beautiful sunny landscapes. Tourist photography, it is argued, is intrinsically bound up with self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and 'in performances of posing, the body is brought into play as a culturally coded sign

– of happiness, politeness, attractiveness, intimacy, and so on’ (Larsen 2005: 425). In this case the pose of a smiling subject in the foreground of a natural landscape, suggests that the landscape is the stage on to which they may perform. Larsen (2005: 429) makes a further salient point, that ‘in posing, people present themselves as desired future memories’.



Figure 6.10 Paula- Waitakere      Figure 6.11 Ruth – Franz Joseph      Figure 6.12 Helen – Crown Range

Paula’s photograph (figure 6.10), unusually framed by a tourism authority provided picture frame, shows a typical image of the subject being positioned in the centre of a landscape view. The stage has been set by an outside agency (the tourism authority) as a prompt for the performance of the tourist snapshot. Jansson (2007) points out that many tourism sites are designed to provide good photo opportunities. Equally there is an external social expectation on the individual that they will perform in front of the camera in order to produce photographic evidence for the awaiting family back home. In a relaxed manner Paula aged 32 from England poses accordingly, she points out that:

...this was one of my favorite photographs, it reminds me of my first view of New Zealand forest, well they call it bush here and how impressed I was, the picture frame was a quirky idea too I thought.

Ruth’s photograph (figure 6.11) is at the snout of Franz Joseph Glacier. She conveys a relaxed attitude by sitting down on the rocks and reaching over to touch the massive ice structures carried by the glacier. She is focusing the viewer’s attention and curiosity as well as making the statement ‘I was there’. Ruth (aged 45 from England) points out that:

Being up close and seeing a glacier for the first time is fantastic, the scale is just unbelievable. The chunks of ice were massive, and occasionally you could hear like the ice creaking and breaking off. I like this photograph of me and the glacier, it's an unusual place to visit and I thought other people would be interested in seeing it for themselves rather than trying to describe it.

The third photograph shows Helen (figure 6.12) with the Alpine lupins on the Crown Range Road (near Wanaka – South Island). Helen (aged 51 from Australia) points out the reason she likes this image:

I like gardening and this scene just seemed like a fantastic natural garden to me.

The garden links with her own world back home with her new world whilst travelling, both of which are important to the self. It could be argued that the person (subject of the image) is making the statement 'I was there' and showing the important other (the viewer) the importance of the self; the self, being of greater importance than the place itself. The photographs will be later used in the socialization process with family, friends and maybe work colleagues back in the participant's home environment. They will be used as prompts for a longer narrative, to connect and relate the self back to that moment in time, back to the travel experience.



Figure 6.13 Huka Falls Jetboat

Figure 6.14 Kayaking Abel Tasman

Figure 6.15 Body Boarding

The participant's photographs also covered a good representative range of activities, as shown in the figures above. Again the women spoke of the importance of participating in these activities for self-development and enjoyment purposes. The two lesbian couples pictured in Figures 6.14 and 6.15, selected these images as important to them, the togetherness is a feature of both photographs, the togetherness of performing an activity. Although there is actual body space in both photographs

between the couples, a mirroring of postures and general body language does suggest a connectedness, suggesting the bodily and aesthetic pleasures of kayaking together or body boarding together, in beautiful locations was of importance to them.



Figure 6.16 Cacey – Bungee



Figure 6.17 Yvonne- Glacier walk



Figure 6.18 Susan- Skydiving

The above three photographs were representative of the more extreme activities, proof of participation and an aid to enhance personal stories. In addition, the skydiving photograph, creatively taken in the air, served as an extension of memory as well as a record of performance and achievement. The first photograph captures the suspense by the visible stillness of the subject contemplating the jump, whilst the second image is taken by the subject herself, moving at speed through the air and over the landscape, capturing and still framing one moment in time. These photographs represent 'calculated memory', the way one would like to be remembered and to remember places (Baerenholdt et al., 2004). They represent success and achievement but they do not reveal the associated feelings of fear and risk without the subject's own narratives.

Cacey's photograph (figure 6.16) taken by her friend from the viewing platform shows her nervously contemplating and psyching herself up to actually jump off the bridge. Cacey (aged 23 from England) pointed out that:

...this photograph brings back the memories of sheer terror as I was standing daring myself to jump but it also makes me proud of myself because I actually did it..

She goes on to say that her friend had taken another photograph of her in the air

But I was moving too fast and it was blurred I was disappointed an action shot would have been tremendous. I do have a video of the action but that's not as easy to show people at work or to send to you for example.

In this case Hackett's Bungee Jump platform becomes the stage in New Zealand's outdoor theatre for an embodied performance which suggests that the backpacking trip was successful, full of challenge and of personal meaning to the participant. The photograph itself was taken by a friend from a viewing platform positioned and designed for tourists to capture the performance from 'a good angle'.

The second photograph (Figure 6.17) shows Yvonne in a glacial crevasse on Fox Glacier. Yvonne (aged 37 from The Netherlands) stated:

*The first photo is from me in Franz Josef Glacier. I did the full day walk (more climbing I thought) there and it was a hard one that day. I fell down a few meters but somebody caught me so I didn't fall on my head (very lucky). It was pretty scary at times but it was such a good feeling when I finished.*

The third photograph (Figure 6.18) shows the feet of the participant Susan whilst Skydiving. She doesn't reveal her location in New Zealand. Susan (aged 37 from England) stated that;

*This is my favourite photograph. First of all I was pleased that it actually worked, someone in the hostel who had already jumped told me to try and take a photo of my own feet. It was the best experience of my life so far. I can't believe I did it so I am pleased I have a photograph to show people that I actually did it. Also whenever I look at it I have it on my bedroom wall) I remember the feelings I had at the time.*

All three photographs act as memory prompts for the participant and remind them of their achievement.

For Susan the photograph captured 'the best experience of my life' while Cacey recalls the contrasting emotions of 'the sheer terror' as well as the pride in her achievements. 'Photographs ignite embodied reflections that extend beyond the materiality of the photograph' (Scarles, 2009: 472). As reflexive

performances, photographs are also 'beacons of personal, floating, meaningful memory' (Cloke and Pawson, 2008: 6).

### 6.2.3 Theme 3: Cultural and Social Representations



Figure 6.19 Traditional canoe



Figure 6.20 Wakawerawera Cultural show



Figure 6.21 Maori Dance

The cultural photographs showed the Maori dancers (figures 6.20 and 6.21 above) performing to tourists at Rotorua, in their traditions dress. Another photograph showed the Maori carved traditional long boat or sea canoe (figure 6.19) now housed at Waitangi, the historic Maori museum. MacCannell (1989) argues that tourists desire authenticity, or backstage realities (Goffman, 1959) but they only encounter "staged authenticity" a staged performance of Maori life in the past. The fact that three photographs depict staged Maori cultural dancing and one object of authenticity (the canoe) indicates an interest and desire of the women to view such authentic scenes about the lives of the 'native other'. The other two photographs showed other New Zealand structures: Wellington cityscape from above, and another unusual structure a road /rail bridge crossing a very wide river in the South Island. These were both more recent, and perhaps in the photographers minds modern examples of cultural development.

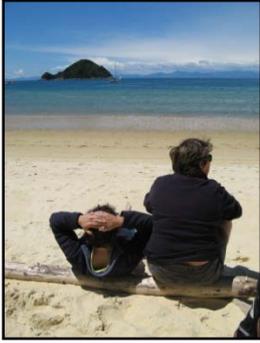


Figure 6.22 Enjoying together



Figure 6.23 Romantic walk



Figure 6.24 Lesbian camp

Finally, social interactions were portrayed in a further two photographs which were of lesbian couples together in the New Zealand landscapes (figures 6.22 and 6.23) and another photograph of a group of lesbian women at night singing to guitar music around a camp fire (figure 6.24). After interviewing a few lesbian couples travelling together, I anticipated that I may receive lesbian couple shots because most lesbian couples interviewed spoke of the importance of and pleasure gained from being free to hold hands or link arms in the quiet locations of New Zealand away from the heterosexual gaze. In addition they said they liked to have photographs of themselves together, hence some of their photography revolved around the **production** of social relations and in effect was concerned with “performing lesbianness”. This is very similar to the work of Larsen (2005: 424) with his concepts of the “family gaze” and ‘performing familiness’ which stresses ‘interactions, relationships, and actively embodied use of space’. The group photograph of lesbian women singing to guitar music around a camp fire, demonstrates the importance and meaning to be part of a group with similar values and understandings. I was present at this gathering and witnessed the performance by the tourists ‘of being gay’. Hence ‘photography is about producing rather than consuming geographies and identities’ (Larsen, 2005: 422). The women can take such photographs back to their home environment and display their lesbian identity through travel photographs.

### 6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Photographs are used before, during and after a traveller's journey. Beforehand, visual images were important in the initial selection of a destination as well as other factors such as word of mouth recommendations. Images are carefully crafted by professionals to create certain atmospheres and moods, and have in the past been criticised for privileging the male gaze. Tourism has often been littered with gender biased images that appeal to the 'male gaze': the bikini clad woman or romantic heterosexual couples strolling along the beach performing and reinforcing social norms of behaviour. In this study, the women traveller's preconceived image of New Zealand, developed through advertising material and textual literature was surpassed in reality. They were extremely impressed with the natural environment and scenery, and were emotionally touched at times by its beauty.

The 'female gaze' experienced in New Zealand produced a diverse set of meaningful photographs albeit in relatively small sample of photographs, giving a glimpse of the female potential. On the whole the photographs were well composed, in focus and generally clear in their intent. The women's selection of photographs to present to me contained the stereotypical famous landmarks that New Zealand has to offer. Photographic narratives of the self and the travel experience painted a picture of enjoyment, challenge, fun, and socially important engagement. The performances of 'being a tourist' was captured at specific moments on the camera, constructing a colourful collage of tourist experiences and giving insight into the experience at large to the potential audience. Travellers also showed one another photographs to promote a specific activity or to show off their own achievements. They also sent images home via the internet, showing off their achievements and maintaining important communication links with family and friends. Photographs are therefore concerned with producing social relations. Afterwards photographs were seen by the women as having several functions: to assist memory, and in production of life stories. They are seen by the women as a permanent, personals

record of their achievements, a souvenir, particularly with regard to adventurous activities such as skydiving, bungee jumping and glacier walking. Photographs were used as diaries or to illustrate blogs and emails sent back home, to confirm the fun, excitement and adventure being experienced. The analysis of the women travellers' own photographs produced three themes firstly: landscapes and wildlife; secondly: landscape, self and activity and thirdly: social and cultural representations. The first category was subdivided into lakes and mountains, seascapes, and landscapes with wildlife. These scenic photographs were well composed, included typical New Zealand landscapes, romanticising the New Zealand landscape, much like photographs produced by advertising agencies. The second theme of landscape, self and activity, predominantly portrayed happy, smiling subjects posing in the foreground of a scenic view, often seated, either in the centre of the view or to one side. These photographs are proof of being there, and being immersed in the experience, a record for future viewing and a tangible object to send back home. Additionally, on returning home these self images are used as object through which to socialise and narrate the highlights of the journey. The third theme of cultural and social representations; included photographs depicting the Maori cultural shows, demonstrating the desire to encounter authenticity, albeit in this case staged authenticity. Finally the only social interaction photographs were provided by lesbian couples, sitting or walking in close proximity and wanting to be photographed in such poses. Performing their lesbian identity in the New Zealand landscape was obviously important as these were the photographs they selected to provide for the research. The remaining photographs were lighter hearted in nature and creative displaying the women's sense of humour.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

### 7.0 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The interpretative ethnographic findings presented in the previous chapters, Chapter 4, 5 and 6, illustrate that touristic experiences in New Zealand can provide a source and the opportunity for self and identity development for independent women travellers. This is emphasised by the results of the research related to the respondent's comprehensions and reflections of tourism, motivations to undertake an independent travel journey of extended length, their understandings and benefits of being an independent traveller, the impacts of physical adventure, wildlife encounters and visual consumption of New Zealand on their self development and self-identity and the importance of social interaction with other travellers, hosts and family and friends back home. The findings also illustrate age related responses to and from tourism experiences; the aspirations of some women to travel solo; the impact of lesbian women's search for their own travel space and the notion of tourism and hidden identities.

'The social, political, economic and cultural world is seen to be transforming our experiences including our leisure experiences' (Scraton, 1994: 249). Travel and tourism experiences are part and parcel of our leisure experiences and are therefore also changing along with technological developments and globalisation. Contemporary women travellers are discussed in Chapter 2 along with the historical context leading to today's women travellers and their associated experiences. 'In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many women in the global community, particularly from the western world, now have the opportunity, freedom in society and financial independence to choose to travel for pleasure to other corners of the world' (Myers, 2010: 138). This trend is linked to changing social and political circumstances for Western women in particular but not exclusively, around the world. Educational opportunity and financial self sufficiency through improvement in earning capacities has greatly increased women's access to a

much wider range of leisure and travel choices. As a consequence a growing number of women worldwide are making the most of their increasing independence and becoming motivated to travel. 'Women are grasping the opportunity to be tourists in their own right; for their own pleasure and satisfaction, breaking away from their hybrid identities of, 'the wife', 'mother', 'girlfriend' or the 'housewife'. Women of all ages are beginning to become empowered and to travel together in close female friendship groups, in two's or alone. They are gaining confidence and are able to independently self-organise their trips' (Myers and Hannam, 2008: 174). For some, it is argued 'the journey becomes a means to escape some of the limitations of everyday life at home. It becomes an individualised time space for experiments with both identity and movement' and 'the freedom', or rather control over personal time, gives the backpacker a unique opportunity to be in charge of her own actions for a long period of time' (Elsrud, 1998: 329).

In total 60 women were interviewed in this study, some were New Zealanders who owned businesses and provided accommodation or activities for the women travellers. The women travellers had researched, planned and booked their own individual itineraries, often using modern technology, in particular the internet, to aid their research. 'Typically, these tourists collect much of their information from websites, seeking on-line travel details and bookings' (Bell, 2008: 348). However, books such as the Lonely Planet and New Zealand Tourism literature were used to select appropriate adventures and activities. The internet, emails, blogs and other means of social networking allowed them to communicate with their home contacts, families and friends on a regular basis. Most felt this was a valuable and necessary performance. Sending photographs over the internet, downloaded from digital cameras was a popular activity. Photographs were used as a record of achievement, a substitute journal, an addition to a travel journal and an aid to memory and were regarded as a very important element of the modern women traveller.

Few tourism studies (with the exception of Bruner, 1991; Duncan, 2007; Elsrud, 2001; Milman, 1998; Noy, 2004; Richards, 2004) have explicitly examined how and if travel and its experiences can lead to an individual's empowerment, self development and increased emotional and physical well-being. 'Even fewer studies have examined the empowering role of independent travel for women. Thus further research in this area is clearly warranted' (Wilson, 2002: 253). This has been the central focus of this study and hopes to address some of the gaps in previous research, those of positive personal development and self identity aspects attributed to independent travel, specifically for women. It has accessed literature from leisure studies, backpacker tourism studies and gay tourism studies to supplement the findings. The next part of this final chapter reflects on the work in the thesis chapter by chapter and then discusses the limitations and suggestions for future research.

Travel motivations were individual and multi-faceted, rarely was there just one reason cited as a trigger or motivational factor for embarking upon a travel journey. However, it was possible to identify common motives and also some which suggested age as a distinguishing factor. Common motives were socially biased: to satisfy an ambition to travel to explore the world, to gain cultural knowledge and meet people from other cultures as well as other travellers and to escape social roles, pressures and expectations of the home environment. Lash and Urry (1994) state a number of travel motifs including 'a curiosity about places, peoples and cultures'; and 'an aspiration to understand the relative place of one's own society and culture in a broadened global framework' cited in (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999: 239).

From a psychological angle, the women wanted to gain freedom and time to explore other environments and themselves, they wanted to relax and have fun. The following generalisations were possible but are not hard and fast categories because individual variations and personalities always

need to be acknowledged. The younger women were often away from their home environment for the first time, a 'gap year' or a shorter period in between school and university or more likely university and the employment market. They wanted the freedom away from restrictions imposed by social networks at home to explore the world and themselves and develop through their travel experiences, planning their future directions. They wanted to have fun, a laugh and experience the 'cool' (socially respected and admired) aspects of travel, have adventurous experiences, meet and associate with other 'like-minded' travellers. The women in the midlife age group, may be in what they termed a 'midlife crisis', a relationship breakdown, a divorce or needing to find a new direction, for example if their children had flown the nest. Some were searching for a new identity, other than that of mother or wife and others for a new job or career, a new direction in their life. They wanted freedom, peace and a slower pace of life to have time to self-reflect. The older aged women travellers were making the most of an opportunity that they acknowledged was only possible more recently, due to rapid social changes which they had witnessed during their lifetimes. They were keen to explore other cultures and enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of the New Zealand landscapes. They were very enthusiastic and appreciative of their opportunity to travel the world and to become a modern 'wanderlust woman'. Older female holiday makers in the UK were studied by Stone and Nicol (1998) including the needs and motivations of single women (aged 30-55). The findings indicated that this group of women display specific holiday needs and deserves, on occasions, separate treatment by the tourist industry.

Social interaction with other travellers was very important and was used by the women to self explore by openly discussing themselves with complete strangers. The feeling of freedom by escaping social norms and restrictions at home allowed the women to 'be themselves', to self access and analyse in the time they had constructed for themselves by leaving their home environment. The motivation to travel often revolved around the need to escape from a personal crisis, to reassess their life direction, to gain freedom and independence or to make of an opportunity or fulfil an ambition. The older women

had often been married, an expectation of their social era were moving on from the role of a carer to children and other family members and were searching for a new identity or fulfilling a lifelong ambition. The middle-aged women were often experiencing some problems either at work or in their personal life, a relationship breakdown, in what they termed a mid-life crisis. The younger women saw travel as an expected part of their life course, unlike the older women who thought they would never get such an opportunity, and were making the most of a gap between school and university or more likely university and starting a career or a family.

The presence of other travellers to the women was of prime importance and the social interaction of significance, as a way of cultural exchange, of forging new friendships and self-learning through feedback from others. Murphy (2001) contended that social interaction was a prime motive for travel and that it constituted a central experiential attribute to the trip and as Byrne (2003: 444) points out 'identity is composed in social, communicative interactions with others'. Story telling is an important method of gaining a sense of the self according to Giddens's (1991) who goes on to point out that there are two sets of narrative, that which is internal (i.e. kept to oneself) and an external representation of experiences to others.

The solo women in this study reported an increase in self trust, trusting of their own instincts, which in itself is an empowering achievement. Such self trust, they said, allowed for a more open approach to other people and a deeper inner learning. Such trust allowed them to be more open and honest about themselves, often to strangers and they found it easier than at home to form initial bonds and friendships particularly with other women. They found that the solo travel situation or circumstance in a way forced them to communicate with other travellers more often than they would if they were accompanied by a friend or partner this was viewed as a positive element because it allowed them to

interact and communicate with women whom they may normally not associate and therefore they felt they gained a wider education than they would otherwise. One woman pointed out that making new friends can make you feel really good, popular and more confident in oneself. The freedom gained from escaping what one woman quoted as 'her daily frame' or another travelling companion, someone else who would create a link or reference point back home or from peer pressure, led to enjoyment and 'the feelings of freedom, spontaneity and strength' (Jordan and Gibson, 2005: 294). The two researchers had found in a previous study (Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, b) that solo travel creates a sense of empowerment, freedom and confidence. By travelling alone one woman realised that, on reflection, she adapted to the needs of others in her own environment, such self reflection, it could be argued improves self-awareness, empowerment and hence one's position in life. Wilson (2000: 251-252) in her study reported a sense of empowerment as an outcome of travelling solo, 'through an interlinking process of negotiation of constraint, dealing with the challenge of solo travel and resistance to societal expectations, these women reported a sense of empowerment and benefited from solo travel in a myriad of ways.' She goes on to point out that a sense of empowerment was reported in that 'solo travel provides a time and space for personal growth and identity development'; 'a new found sense of self-confidence and assertiveness'; 'overcome shyness and a lack of self-esteem'.

It could be argued that the effects of social norms can never be fully escaped as many feminist, gender and critical theorists have debated. It is social norms and expectations that mould women's behaviours during upbringing and adult life, in their respective societies and are therefore are part of the individual's makeup. Motives for travelling included escape but in a slightly contradictory manner as there was a widespread need by the women, although there were a few exceptions, to maintain contact with home family networks on a fairly regular basis, both family and friends; indicating the strings of thought, in their minds as well as their behaviours reach out across the world preventing total escape. Many women gave evidence of the strong bonds, either with their mother back home or the children

back home who they needed to inform that they were safe and well and enjoying their travels. The emotional escape from such bonds, albeit temporary, appeared to be a difficulty or initial constraint to some women further research into this area could be of interest.

Some of the American women in particular spoke of the expectations of American society go to high school and university, develop a career and eventually settle down to have a family. These women were questioned more by their families about their intended actions of travelling and had to contend with the potential safety issues that an American travelling may face. The lesbian women in particular, spoke of their position at home as being difficult, usually because they were living either a hidden or 'out' homosexual identity, in a heterosexual society with its associated rules and regulations. Travel and holidays for them constituted an escape from their everyday environment where they needed to be guarded and conscious of their differences. As one astute, well travel 70 year old woman traveller pointed out: 'travel is about developing the inner mind' and 'inner energy is affected by external happenings'. By travelling, the opportunity to encounter wider variety happenings than in normal daily life could therefore, according to her way of thinking, increase the boost to a person's inner energy.

A further benefit to the solo women in particular was that they were able to converse with other travellers about their day highlights and more importantly sometimes linked up with other travellers to share experiences as a variation to their travel style. The women in this study enjoyed the social interactions that took place in the various travel spaces, the dormitory, the hostel common rooms and dining areas. The women's dormitories were a particular space where the women could relax, completely removed from the male gaze and its associated pressures, and share intimate knowledges with their new friends. Research from leisure studies, 'emphasises the importance of female kin and friendship networks to women's well being, demonstrating the beneficial effects of networks' Green

(1998: 176). Social camaraderie and making new friends was an important element and of great benefit in the overall enjoyment of a woman's stay at any particular establishment, as discussed in the accommodation section of Chapter 5. 'Talk with other women which is one of the most commonly chosen leisure activities across differences of age, social class and ethnicity, provide women with a series of arenas in which to explore and review the many facets of changing, multiple identities' Green (1998: 1830). The women in this study felt that close, honest social interactions and conversations with fellow travellers and feedback from strangers is valuable in the self assessment process. The women commented on this fact that '*having fun*', '*a laugh*', '*telling jokes*' and '*a carry on*' were important elements of their interactions, particularly with other women also dressed in their pyjamas or nightwear. Such interaction are a great learning experience which the women felt enabled them to be more understanding, more tolerant, more patience when dealing with people from other cultural backgrounds and beliefs and consequently becoming a better world citizen. Some made very good friends and because of the networking potential of the internet had every intention of continuing their friendships once they had returned home, some planned to visit the other person or meet up again later at some stage during their journey.

Sexuality is one of our key identity characteristics and as such can impact on tourism experiences. Escaping social norms applied to all the women in the study but the homosexual women were perhaps more restricted by them in their daily lives. Escaping the heterosexual gaze of a home society, the lesbian women in particular were keen to perform their lesbian identities whilst travelling. They felt freer and more able to walk hand in hand or show a conservative amount of affection in their anonymous liminal travel space. The lesbian women regarded New Zealand as a gay friendly environment, a place where they could escape to and perhaps feel more relaxed and less pressured by societal expectation in order that they could perform or express a lesbian identity, albeit for a short period of time. The availability of lesbian only accommodation and adventure activities gave the women the much needed

opportunity to become part of a small lesbian community of where they could feel safe, 'normal' and relaxed away from the heterosexual gaze. New Zealand's relatively small population and vast amounts of natural environment meant it was fairly easy to escape society by going on long walks, to remote beaches natural forest the couples interviewed felt more able to behave normally, as they would in their own private space and therefore felt less ostracised. 'Lesbian women are escaping the structures and associated constraints of home life in two ways; of being a woman in a heterosexual world and of being homosexual women in a heterosexual, often homophobic world' Myers, (2008:132). Additionally, through seeking small lesbian owned and run accommodations and small lesbian communities located across New Zealand they also benefited in that they could socialise not only with other lesbians, both locals and visitors, something which they yearned.

The benefits gained from the women travellers' participation in adventure and wildlife activities are considered in this section. A wide range of activities were chosen by the women, (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5) including the more extreme adrenaline rush pursuits of bungee jumping, glacier hiking, heli-hiking, caving, scuba diving and jet boating, which were more popular with the younger age group. Softer adventure activities such as tramping (hill walking), visiting volcanic parks, guided tours through limestone caves and swimming with seals, dolphins and whale watching were amongst the most popular. Backpackers and independent travellers alike associate 'extreme' and 'soft' adventure activities with New Zealand and acknowledge that 'adventures are particularly effective when it comes to 'Young women can actively construct their identities, for example, by taking risks and contesting established risk discourses' (Green and Singleton, 2006: 867). Some young women in this study felt that their travel experiences were a record of achievement which segregated them from other women who had no such experience and was therefore a valuable asset. Risk taking touches the inner spirit and as such is about the 'self' and about 'self challenge' and 'self development'. It is in the facing of such risks found in action and adventure, that allows people to feel self-actualised (Elias and Dunning,

1986). In this context of this study risk-taking was a necessary challenge to, and desire of, the women but it was not always 'primarily a material, physical fact, but rather a device used to construct a story' (Elsrud 2004: 298), 'expressing a strong and independent identity' (Lightfoot, 1997: 127).

The women in this study walked alone in a variety of rural landscapes primarily to have time to think, usually about themselves and their life predicaments. There was an appreciation of the powers of nature in giving them something to help them on their life journey. Walking in the outdoor setting was of prime importance to some solo and other travellers who removed themselves temporarily from their travel partner to give themselves freedom or as they called it, 'me-time', for contemplation and to communing with "nature" rather than people.. Previous research, over many years in the field of leisure, has reported positive and other therapeutic benefits of participation in physical and outdoor recreational activities (Henderson, 1996ab; Little, 1997; Wallace, 1993) but a limited number have discussed the empowering benefits of independent or solo travel (Butler, 1995; Elsrud, 1998; Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, b; Hall and Kinnaird, 1994; Obenour, 2005; Riley, 1998; Wearing and Wearing, 1996). From the point of view of this study where both solo and partnered travellers were interviewed, the solo women were the ones who gained a stronger sense of self confidence and empowerment because of the individual effort to overcome constraints and negotiations as a consequence of by the act of solo travel in comparison to travelling together.

Nearly all the women had participated in adventure activities, the majority more than one activity and most had to be selective due to financial reasons but the will was definitely there to get involved. The extreme adventure was more appealing to younger travellers, the kudos and ability of these activities to impress other travellers and those back home were motivating factors as well as personal challenge. The fact that the women talked about how they were looking forward to telling the stories related to

these unusual and difficult challenges conveyed the importance of them and their meaning to me. Such risk taking and adventure narrative presents 'a strong story about the self' an "adventure narrative" (Elsrud, 2001: 603) and is therefore a beneficial part of their travel experience. During the interviews the excitement about the act showed in the voices, animated responses and enthusiasm displayed by the women.

Climbing to a mountain viewpoint, experiencing the excitement of a balloon ride and seeing dolphins in the wild, were all examples the women gave of how the combination of the beautiful environmental setting and the activity being performed produced an overwhelming emotional response, one which they found special and memorable. The benefit being that they experienced 'moments of highest happiness and fulfilment' (Maslow, 1968: 73), their thoughts totally removed from other outside influences whereby they were able to relax and absorbed the moment and all the pleasures it entailed, promoting a self awareness and self-fulfilment. One women suggested that she "**met with her spiritual side**" during such special moments and one owner of an adventure company noted that many of her clients "**when challenged outside their comfort zones they often become emotional and discover something new about themselves that they hadn't expected**". Through the adventure activities chosen in this study, the women appeared to absorb elements of both the environment around them and the specific emotional and physical feeling associated with whatever they were performing or taking part in. The women acknowledged the beauty of the New Zealand landscapes and were emotionally moved by some of the sights and sounds while participating in the adventure activities. When asked to describe a special emotional moment relating to their adventure in New Zealand, it wasn't just the physicality of the movement or activity being performed but all that it encapsulated in that moment in time' (Myers, 2010: 131).

Edensor (2000: 82) suggests walking can be a means 'to achieve a reflexive awareness of the self and particularly the body and the senses' and 'walking can be particularly suitable for stimulating reflexivity' Edensor (2000: 102). Being in natural surroundings stimulated the women in this study to relax, enjoy and appreciate the environment almost like a weight taken from their shoulders, a meltdown as they moved away from the reality and responsibilities in busy, pace of the travel surroundings. An 'Alice in Wonderland' type scenario, where the travelling women move away from a restricted environment, both mentally and socially to the freedom in another world where they have time to explore themselves and the environment at a slower, more relaxed pace towards a freeing of the body, a rediscovery of childish sensation and aesthetic and moral regeneration' (Edensor, 2000: 84). The women very much appreciated the freedom of being out walking and discovering in New Zealand, the word freedom was used many times by many women, "I feel free and can think more clearly" and in the words of the women it allows you "to relax and forget your problems", "time for thought", "to reflect on one's own life" and "can improve your mood". The opportunity to explore the inner self becomes a greater possibility whilst in a place of perceived freedom 'detaching the individual from their place in the social structure (and loosening) the moorings of their culturally constructed self' (Jarvis, 1997: 37). Robertson et al. (2009: 110) noted that 'walkers suggested that by walking in nature, they were involved in internal psychological and mental healing'. The women in this study provided evidence of this and in addition seemed to find the beautiful peace and freedom very important elements of desire.

The importance of all the senses, not just the visual, in performing and consuming the environment was evident from some of the women's descriptions of their experiences, references, to feel (it was really hard to breathe) hearing (the bubbling mud pools) and kinaesthetic experiences (the forces on your body) in their narrative. Veijola and Jokenin's (1994) work emphasised and developed ideas of attempting to understand the bodily senses in relation to tourism, the notion of embodiment, the tourism experience being assessed and experienced through the holistically via the bodies senses, partly as a

critique of Urry's (1990a) work on the tourist 'gaze' which they say overemphasised the visual. Examples of the importance of all the senses were narrated by the women when describing their experiences in such places as the glow worm caves, the thermal parks and swimming with dolphins in their natural environment. It could be argued that the most memorable moments of a journey may be those where several senses are activated simultaneously, from the enthusiasm and detailed descriptions made by the women these moments stood out as important as they were already firmly developed and retained in the women's minds, this would make an interesting topic area for further research.

The benefits were internally felt at the time but were etched into memory as special moments to use in the future, to refer back to self reflection and to construct as exciting, interesting stories to relive with others and perhaps to present a slightly different self. Special moments or encounters with wildlife, particularly whales and dolphins, gave the women 'warm feelings inside', creating 'an inner calm' and 'peacefulness' in some it triggered physical responses such as 'hair on the back of your neck standing up', and 'tears of joy'. The importance of the embodied experience of tourism encounters was again suggested by the women's sensually motivated responses, including: 'the sound of the wind in the ears', 'cameras clicking', the 'movement of the vessel' and even the 'tension in the air'. This study focuses on the lived experiences of women tourists interacting with dolphins during sightseeing tours and swimming with dolphins. During dolphin viewing trips the women appeared to have a perception of the dolphin as a 'fun' creature, possessing an image of softness with peaceful attributes being assigned. There was a widespread desire to view dolphins in the wild, an ambition to be fulfilled.

Many independent women travellers were actively seeking encounters with wildlife and on doing so experienced pleasure and at times deeply emotional feelings; in their own words '*fantastic, amazing,*

*cool and exciting*. From the women's narrative, the enthusiasm in the voice when reliving or retelling the experiences and the richer descriptions used in the in depth interviews, I felt the most meaningful encounters were those which involved entering the wildlife's own habitat, such as the dolphin and seal swimming, again suggesting encounters with greater physical involvement and sensuous feelings were more deeply meaningful. Orams (2000: 562) notes that 'increasing amounts of work have been directed at understanding the impacts of whale watching on whales, little effort has been directed at the impacts of whale watching on the watchers themselves'. The responses of the women in this study indicate that whale watching is a highly regarded, popular, special event and the small number of women's responses in this study suggests from a psychological point of view there may be justification to exploring this phenomenon further. A gender comparative angle may reveal differences in this aspect of tourism consumption.

This study also introduces questions of a gender perspective and a woman's way of performing into the discussion on tourist vision and photography and attempts to identify the importance of photographic evidence to the women on their journey, in an effort to contribute to the development of a greater understanding of dimensions of photography associated with tourism experience. In this study, all the women except one, possessed and used a digital camera. Without exception the women were enthusiastic, sometimes extremely enthusiastic, about taking photographs and most were planning to organise them into some accessible form, either physical traditional albums or using computer software to construct a pictorial representation of their journey to show other people and for their own future pleasure. Some were using photographic images as a form of diary, others used images as an aid to memory for writing a journal at a later date, and others talked of the inner enjoyment of revisiting places and feelings and emotions evoked from the still image. 'Most regard tourist photography as a pleasure rather than a burden, as an integral to pleasurable and memorable sightseeing' (Baerenholdt et al., 2004: 81). Some of the women had blogs which they updated regularly, other used emails and texts

and often inserted photographs as proof of their experiences, that a good time was being had and to boast about their achievements. Photographs were seen by the women as a personal record of achievement. The progress of the journey was transmitted over thousands of miles back home, a new form of personal interaction and perhaps a way of immediately sharing personal achievements, successes and even changing identities.

On many occasions I observed travellers both in hostel common rooms and on public transport sharing their photographs either via the small screen on the digital camera, on the computers available in the hostels or sometimes they would appear with provide hard glossy copies to share and discuss with fellow travellers. Through conversation, images provoke deeper thought and memory and move well beyond their two dimensional status becoming interwoven with life and intricate meanings. 'Reflection is not, of course, confined to text but may appear in photographs and is articulated in conversation' (Pearce, 2007: 1287). They are also used to assist other travellers in constructing their itinerary, a combined 'word of mouth' supported by an 'image stimulus' used as a recommendation of a place to visit. The camera in some cases was seen as a barrier which distanced the photographer from the experience creating a situation where they became an observer as oppose to a participant, removed from the reality of the moment behind the lens of the camera.

The subjective views of the women in this study serve to illustrate their interaction with the environment and the meaning of such interaction. The landscapes seen in New Zealand were described by the women as: '*amazing*', '*beautiful*', '*awesome*' and '*spectacular*'. Often the narrative was descriptively rich, the memories of the intensity of the view was captured in the expressive nature of the interviewee's voices and other non verbal expressions. It was found in this study that the visual dimension of the human senses was important to the women in several areas: visual representations of

New Zealand were important pull factors in initial destination choice; the visual scenes of New Zealand's amazing and tranquil beauty were of psychological importance to the women, creating an atmosphere in which to self-reflect; creating their own visual representations of New Zealand in the form of photographs was an importance means to assist memory and provide a social record of achievement to convey to people back home.

The study contributes to knowledge base about the importance of photographic images to independent women travellers and presents field evidence of what the women photographed and how they used the photographs. Researchers point out that 'we have virtually no knowledge of why and how tourists produce photographic images' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 23), in this study I found no literature specifically addressing a women's photography and a very small number of studies about tourist photographs in general. This contribution to knowledge reinforces a further original aspect to this research and gives new insight into the relationship between photography and tourism from a women's perspective. The study illuminates the significance of photography as a means of providing evidence of performance, a visual journal, as an aid to memory and as a social tool to be displayed and share on social networking sites. 'Photography is one of the unique modern mediums through which people produce life-narratives and lasting memories by performing photographic events actively and bodily' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 25). Research findings show that the women highly valued both their experiences of travel and photography and demonstrate this by the production of good quality, well composed photographs which illustrate important elements of their travel experiences and allow them to communicate those experiences to others by means of modern technology. The analysis of the women traveller's own photographs produced three themes; landscapes and wildlife; landscape, self and activity and thirdly, social and cultural representations of New Zealand.

## 7.1 RESEARCH AIMS REVISITED

The research study aim was to investigate and analyse women traveller's experiences in New Zealand as specified in Chapter 1.3 and alongside eight objectives were also listed in the same section. These objectives were proposed to contribute to the fulfilment of the specific enquiry aim. These objectives are revisited to identify the extent to which they have been achieved, and hence the extent to which the research aims were achieved. They are considered one at a time in their original order as stated in Chapter 1.

- To collate in-depth biographies of straight and lesbian independent women travellers in New Zealand

Objective 1 was fulfilled, 60 interviews in total were completed which included international women travellers from four continents and some New Zealanders who were tourism providers, some specifically marketing to the women only and lesbian markets. Although the lesbian women's market is a niche market, much less visible than the male homosexual market, I was able to successfully access it and interview several lesbian travellers in their own right. Many gay studies refer to the lesbian tourist but the emphasis is overwhelmingly male orientated.

Most independent travellers are longer term travellers and to reduce costs have a tendency to stay in backpacker hostel, lodges and campgrounds, all of which have social, common room areas which made it easy to locate such travellers to interview. The women travellers were very enthusiastic and keen to participate, because part of their routine of being an independent traveller is to socialise and meet new people and talk about themselves and their experiences, therefore they were more than willing to share their travel stories. Such travellers timetable free time and relaxation into their routines, particularly on a night time in hostels and were therefore available for in-depth interviews without being under any time constraints, although I tried not to exceed my self-imposed hour limit. Unfortunately due

to language barriers, the Asian women traveller, of whom there are many as they are one of New Zealand's target markets, biographies were not obtained.

- *To represent the voices of lesbian travellers and solo women travellers.*

Objective 2 was achieved as narrative was provided which included the voices of lesbian travellers and solo women travellers as well as others travelling in pairs or small groups. In addition, it also included access into the world of lesbian women providers, with their experiences and opinions relating to the wants, needs and desires of the lesbian woman travellers. Lesbian women were located at women only, or lesbian owned accommodations and were very willing to share their experiences with me. This group of women, in general research terms are a more difficult group to locate and access, which makes the collection of data in this study of great research value. A unique insight was afforded into the world of homosexual women traveller, giving a much needed addition to gay tourism research work which has been predominantly male biased and orientated in the past. Solo women's voices were also heard and provided interesting comparisons to travel considerations between women sharing the travel experience with one or two friends.

- *To critically investigate the potential of travel in developing new identity perspectives.*

Objective 3 has been achieved because throughout the investigation the women spoke of experiences, reflections, encounters and/or incidences, which were new to them. Such interactions allowed for reassessment of personal identity and in some cases help develop new dimensions to their identity, thus, it could be said expanding their sense of identity. For example, many women participated in challenging adventure activities for the first time, creating a new 'adventure identity' to their repertoire. Overcoming fear and challenge in many travel situations allowed a more confident identity to develop

and an improved self esteem. Lesbian women were able to perform their lesbian identity in a public arena, some for the first time, escaping hidden identities back at home, perhaps confirming and strengthening their lesbian identity. Solo women developed greater confidence and self reliance, due to the demands of travelling solo, and were therefore learning about themselves, developing new aspects to their self of identity.

·To critically examine the motivational factors involved in female travel and destination choice.

Objective 4 has been achieved as the research findings illustrate that there are a multitude of motives for independent world travel. Individual social, cultural and financial circumstances are influential factors in the decision making process to take time out to travel. Aspirations to leave a secure home environment are stimulated by a need for freedom from social expectations of the home society; the need to escape constraints and relationships, to have time and space to discover or rediscover the self and refocus identity issues, and to experience new cultures and new adventures to stimulate the mind and body. Motivational factors were varied and personal although there were themes of commonality, the need to access transitional space in which to reassess life was the most common theme. New Zealand was chosen as a destination because of its perceived beautiful landscape; the perceived women and lesbian safe and friendly environment; infrastructure which facilitates the easy of travel, and the adventure activities available at a reasonable price.

·To critically investigate the challenges faced by female tourists before during and after their journey(s).

Objective 5 has been achieved as the research finding illustrates some of the challenges women travellers face before, during and after the journey. Before the journey, social expectation of friends and

family revolved around the issue over the personal safety of women travelling, particularly women travelling solo. The women had to contend with their own doubts and fears as well as those close to them. Others were giving up employment or selecting not to conform to social expectations of their age group. Personal safety and the fear of sexual harassment from the culturally unknown destination was mentioned, particularly with regard to other destinations which the women considered much more challenging than New Zealand. Because the perception and reality of New Zealand are that it is a relatively safe place to visit and travel around the women did not dwell on this issue. The lesbian women had concerns about destination choice and accommodation because they wanted to be able to relax in their own private space and attempt to escape the heterosexual glare and all its connotations. Some were challenged at home and lived through a hidden identity, travel being a temporal means of escape. Some American travellers were challenged by declaring their nationality whilst travelling and some concealed their nationality for fear being political targets. Previously, a considerable amount of research has focused on the solo women traveller and the constraints faced and negotiated. This study focus was related to the women's experiences in New Zealand which produced a larger volume of narrative concerning the risks and challenges of travel activities such as extreme adventure and the benefits of such touristic experiences.

**·To critically evaluate the potential benefits travel experiences provide for women.**

Objective 6 has been achieved because the ethnographic findings show aspirations to participate in a travel journey and travel related activities are stimulated by the desire to further develop and educate the self. The narratives produced provided evidence about what the women's interests were, how they met challenges, what they felt about once in a lifetime experiences and what they regarded as the personal benefits gained from independent travel. Self reflection both during and after the journeys, by

these predominantly very well educated women produced a whole range of benefits, that in some cases were directly related to identity production and enhancement.

- *To critically investigate the participation, by women travellers in adventure activities in New Zealand.*

Objective 7 was achieved because the women travellers were very active during their stay in New Zealand, and without exception they all participated in at least one adventure activity, be it extreme adventure, such as skydiving or soft adventure, such as tramping in the wilderness. Consequently a vast amount of narrative data was collected relating to the wide range of activities available giving a comprehensive insight into the women travellers adventure participation and the meaning it had to them. Traditionally, adventure has been male dominated and associated with the masculine attributes. Contemporary women participated in New Zealand in adventure activities on an equal footing with their male counterparts, thus reinforcing the idea of a blurring of gender stereotypes and socially expectations.

- *To critically evaluate tourism products specifically marketed for women and provide suggestions for the tourism industry based on relevant findings.*

Objective 8 had been addressed because the findings provided an overview of the accommodation and activities provided by New Zealand businesses, from both a women traveller's and client's perspective as well as from the provider's perspective. The research findings illustrate what the providers think the independent woman are searching for and what the women feel are the most desirable feature, particularly with regard to accommodation. The provision for the niche lesbian market in New Zealand is considered and evaluated by my own observations and those of the lesbians interviewed.

Backpacker marketing is becoming more aware of the specific needs in general, one large backpacker chain now provides a women-only floor and small establishments have carefully considered what the independent woman requires in today's global environment and are adapting to their needs. Suggestions are made by myself for tourism providers from information evaluated from the women travellers.

## 7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The contribution of this research to the furthering of knowledge can be recognised as having six main areas. Firstly, the findings further the comprehension of the meaning and significance of independent women traveller's experiences. Secondly, the role of tourism as an actor in personal and identity development has been developed. Thirdly, the important aspects of tourism in the lives of lesbian women travellers has been investigated. Fourthly, the role of photography and modern technology in the lives of women travellers has been analysed. Fifthly, the potential implication of the findings for tourism marketers and developers has been noted. Finally, I have furthered interpretative practice as a research method.

Moreover, the thesis contributes to the emerging literature in tourism studies related to the tourist experience, from a gendered perspective. The thesis draws upon a range of inter- disciplinary work, from tourism studies, leisure studies, women's studies, gender studies, sports studies, cultural geography, feminist studies and queer theory. It is qualitative and interpretative in nature, drawing upon a few precepts from feminist research. The study's main theoretical contribution is to the field of tourism studies, in particular adventure tourism lesbian tourism research.

The research answers calls for the neglected voices of women, whereby 'women's roles and experiences in tourism in the main have been understudied, and they have being generally rendered invisible (Cook and Fonow, 1990). This contribution explores the experiences of independent women travellers in New Zealand in an attempt to gain insight into a women's holistic view of the journey and touristic experiences and the potential benefits that can be gained from travelling. The work compliments and extends the work of feminist tourism scholars such as (Aitchison, 1996; Craik, 1997; Davidson, 1996; Deem, 1996; Kinniard and Hall, 1994, 1996; Richter, 1994; Swain, 1995) who offer a reconstructed and reinterpreted analysis of tourism from a gendered standpoint.

This research also builds on work of only a handful of researchers focusing upon women travellers. Previous work has focussed upon travel constraints, constraints negotiation in tourism studies has resulted in referring to constraints as negative dimension (see, Hudson and Gilbert, 1999), however more recently a constraints approach has been used to successfully explore solo women travellers in particular (Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, b; Wilson, 2004) and from empirical leisure studies found that women face more constraints to their leisure participation than do men (Deem, 1992; Jackson and Henderson, 1995; Henderson, 1997.) Personal safety for women travellers is paramount, however safety issues did not emerge as a major topic in the conversations with reference to New Zealand, because New Zealand is perceived and is in reality an easy, safe destination to travel around and visit. Research by (Jordan and Gibson, 2000; Hillman, 1999; Hottola, 2008; Westwood, Pritchard and Morgan, 2000) documents physical safety, women's concerns and experiences of travel.

This research reaches a little further into the realm of the women travellers' experiences and performances, details the feelings and emotions and embodiment associated with activities and uncovering some of the most important aspect of the travelling world to women. The meanings of their

travel experiences are evident in the narrative provided relating to a wide variety of experiences whilst in New Zealand both touristic experiences and every day experiences of hostel life. It adds to research relating to empowerment, autonomy and identity construction by (Elsrud, 2001; Gibson, 2001; Gibson and Jordan, 1998a, b; Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Maoz, 2007; Myers and Hannam, 2008; Obenour, 2005; Wearing and Wearing, 2001; Wilson and Little, 2005). The embodied experiences of adventure activities and of photographic moments are captured through the women's narrative and add a more personally focused dimension with concrete examples of women's actual feelings and emotions, desires and motivations.

### 7.3 DISCUSSION OF LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the research study are affected by the scope, design, conduct and findings of the investigation. Clearly, the relatively small sample of participants in this study makes it difficult to generalise these sixty opinions to a broader population of women travellers. It is also problematic to presume that women travellers associated with other sectors of travel would experience similar experiences when travelling, for example other pleasure women travellers on package tours, women travelling as a family group or business women travellers. Therefore, generalisability is relatively limited to this particular sample. From a positivist stance, generalisability refers to the transfer the findings back to the population at large (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). 'In qualitative research such as this a single case or small non-random sample is selected precisely **because** the researcher wishes to understand the particular depth, not to find out what is generally true of many (emphasis in original)' (Merriam, 1998: 208). In this study generalisability was not the aim, the intention was to study a small group of independent women travellers in New Zealand, and it was not independent women travellers at large. The intention in this study was to gather meaningful narrative which was rich and in-depth, displayed in a way, using quotes and excerpts from the women themselves to illustrate and therefore validate in the

readers mind the strength of the information in each thematic area. As mentioned earlier in this chapter the experiences of the women are specifically related to New Zealand and its tourism provision and is therefore biased towards adventure activities and not sun, sea and sand locations such as Thailand, another independent traveller popular destination, or India with its contrasting cultural challenges for independent female travellers.

A similar study of independent women travellers, in different locations like the above mentioned destinations would be of interest and would provide a broader view of independent world travel and the affect of destination on the overall experience. Secondly, a further potential research study could use the internet to locate and perhaps video-link interview women from all over the world about their travels in general, not specifically restricted to one location, where it would be anticipated that an additional set of themes may appear.

The quantitative paradigm refers to the notion of reliability whereby the study's findings can be replicated in a future study. The qualitative, interpretative paradigm criticises this notion because it fails to acknowledge the dynamic nature of human behaviour and the continually changing context of human lifestyles. The reliability (discussed in Chapter 3) of this study's findings, is associated with the idea of dependability or consistency of results with relation to the social phenomenon under enquiry and the degree to which the results are consistent with the data collected. The fact that the data was collected in the field location, live as it happened, so to speak, increases the possibility of the data being reliable and consistent. In this study, the collection of reflective data from the women after they had returned home added to the reliability of the study as it verified some of the issues found during the interviews themselves. However, I do have the self awareness to acknowledge that my own world travel experiences and culturally nurtured gendered opinions have influenced the research process, the

structuring and the written text. However, maintaining this awareness throughout, every effort was made to allow the freedom of expression for the women in the interview situation, and to analyse and present the opinions of the participants, in an unbiased manner.

A further limitation relates to the social, cultural and racial diversity of the women interviewed. The demographic profile displayed in Chapter 3 the participants as being predominately single, only the older women had children and they originated from mostly first world, western countries and were very well educated. Therefore it could be argued that it was socially, culturally and racially limited. However the random selection represented the women observed travelling except, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3, it only contains interview with three Asian women, whose responses were very weak, due to language barriers and it therefore, disappointingly does not represent a true picture of the all the independent women observed travelling around New Zealand and staying in the hostels. The women only hostel in Christchurch and the new backpackers in Rotorua were focal point for Asian women travellers, they were visible but not accessible, a very frustrating position for myself and the results of the study.

#### 7.4 DISCUSSION OF FUTURE RESEARCH

During the conduct of the study additional interpretative ethnographic findings emerged, which presents an opportunity for me to address these alternative inspections for future research. Firstly, the niche lesbian tourism market requires further investigation, possible from a global stance. Due to the potentially sensitive subject of sexuality, the interpretative insider approach of in depth interviews would be most appropriate. Secondly, a further comparative study, following a similar pattern of data collection but in a completely different location or destination, for example, India, Africa, or South America would perhaps generate different issues and benefits for the independent woman traveller.

The women in this study talked about the safety aspect of travelling, always referring to difficult and problematic encounters in other countries as they had no such narrative from New Zealand, which was considered a very safe destination. They also referred to the very different cultural behaviours of other women, less privileged than themselves, something that didn't feature in relation to New Zealand, in some ways it was too similar to their western ways. Thirdly, further analysis of reflective data from the women after the women have returned home, with possible evidence about potential changes in identity and personal behaviour, as a result of a long term independent, from women themselves, as in this study but also close family and friends to establish whether long term changes and impacts do change women's lives. Fourthly, a close look at the role of diaries, both written in the traditional manner, blogs and other internet forms of communication in identity formation or reformation would be useful.

The success of this study and its methods in collecting detailed experiential, personal data, causes me to advocate further, the use of reflexivity and the an insider position in an attempt to gain access to women's personal and sometimes emotional feelings and experiences. Whilst this paper centres upon experiences and encounters of female independent travellers, a very similar study could be applied to the male independent traveller, or a gendered, comparative study could be encouraged.

## 7.5 MY REFLECTIONS

Reflexivity can be regarded as the act of making oneself the object of one's own observations, and 'the term 'reflexivity' is used to refer to the researchers capacity to reflect upon their actions and values during research, whether in producing data or writing accounts' Feighery (2006: 269) and 'has variously been concerned with the researcher-self and the personal experiences of the research process' (Ellis

and Bochner, 2000). This short section contains my reflective thoughts, in an attempt to balance my subjective comments at the beginning of the thesis.

My enthusiasm and hence motivation for this thesis has served a very positive purpose in maintaining momentum over a 5 year period. My journey has taken me to physical destinations, Australia and New Zealand during my pilot study and New Zealand on the actual study. I have also gained a wealth of knowledge and experience by attending a number of International Tourism conferences, in New Zealand, Bangkok, India and South Korea, as well as others in the UK, at Durham, Newcastle, Leeds Metropolitan, Brighton, Eastbourne and Bournemouth Universities. I enjoyed attending lectures at these conferences and hence widening my knowledge base, presenting my own work, gaining feedback and valuable comments, as well as networking and forging working relationships with several academics, worldwide. I received ESRC funding to attend the World Leisure Conference 2010 in South Korea, where I presented my finding relating to the women's experiences of Adventure Tourism in New Zealand and again met many influential colleagues. My unique ability to network and socialise, pointed out by Kevin, my supervisor on more than one occasion, has finally been recognised by myself, and I do take pride in that ability and need to put into greater use in the future.

The work has given me great pleasure especially that I have successfully completed the task and am satisfied with the outcomes. I have enjoyed both the process and the journey and am proud of my achievements. The study has given me a greater opportunity to travel myself, to research sites and conferences, and i have made the most of that opportunity often adding more destinations as I progressed. The viva, I also found a very positive enjoyable experience, due mainly to the interest, understanding and enthusiasm of the examiners and their impressive ability to work well together as

strangers, in their questioning, to provide a conducive atmosphere for me to defend and explain my thesis.

As a result of undertaking the PhD my confidence has improved greatly and I have developed a sense of purpose in my life, after losing my career and my social life related to sporting activities, due to ill health. My commitment and determination has been positive throughout the journey and I have impressed myself with my ability to focus and produce pleasing and purposeful results of an academic standard. Focusing on developing new skills and on new knowledge has revived my enthusiasm and given me a focal point in my life. I have maintained my motivation and could easily continue research of this subject area, this type of research and research to this standard. My next goal is to write a book chapter to follow my work on adventure tourism, presented in South Korea and to write a journal article for *Annals of Tourism Research*.

By being the researcher in the interview situation I benefited from the interviews themselves and from analysis of the data on a personal level. As a traveller, and on some occasions a solo traveller in a long term world wide context, some of the content of the women's narrative were familiar and recognisable and confirming to my own personal narrative, similarities could be identified. They stimulated my own reflections, on the importance of travel and world exploration, the learning opportunities through travel and the potential self discover. Equally, however many new narrative, concepts, experiences and activities emerged during the research which provided me food for thought and a readjustment of my opinions and values. I already feel and have experienced that my own travel is now infiltrated with ideas and questions (even more so) about why, how, when, and where women are motivated to travel. My personal journey to Japan, recently, tagged on after the Korean conference found me naturally questioning other travellers whilst I stayed backpacker hostels and really I was fighting the urge to

interview some of the other women. One night in particular, we were all in the 8 bedded dormitory at the same time, women from Vietnam, Brazil, Thailand, Australia, Taiwan, Holland and Bolivia, in various states of dress, talking as a group about our travel experiences. I was so frustrated I did not have a dictaphone running to capture some of the very interesting views. I feel I have the desire, enthusiasm and motivation to continue developing my interviewing skills, analysis skills and writing skills and further the cause of representing the voices of independent women travellers. The area which is in greatest need of research is that of lesbian travellers, and is also the area I feel most passionate about and would like to develop further in the future. There are many other future research avenues available: repeating the study in a third world country to compare and contrast themes evolved from findings; researching identity changes through interviewing respondents again once they have been back home for a substantial amount of time, posing the question 'Did travel affect or change your identity and if so how?'; further develop feminine identities and adventure tourism; further explore the importance and use of photographic evidence from travel experiences.

From an identity perspective, I am more positive and confident in my lesbian identity after associating and interviewing lesbians during my study, although even more aware of the social constraints that have affected me negatively during the course of my lifetime. Although attitudes to homosexuality have improved, it is much more acceptable now especially with younger generations, I still hide my gay identity on many occasions. Secondly, I have had to readjust my positioning in life; the experience has boosted my self esteem; increased my confidence and developed new skills. I can now identify as an academic, if I wish, something I did not identify with previously; and I am a world knowledge on independent women travellers. My social network has expanded greatly and I have many new friends and colleagues in academia, so I can therefore identify with that specific group. I feel I am of greater value to society now from being successful and have a more positive identity than before.

My greatest concern at the beginning of the thesis was I capable of working at this high level and could I produce written work of an acceptable standard. Previously, my strengths as the Head of a Physical Education Department, I felt related to my physical ability, both personally as in the capacity as a PE teacher, which is physically orientated in its delivery and organisation. I felt my weakness would be my written work. However, due to my commitment to collect a great deal of data, I found I produced both quality and quantity in written evidence, so my fears did not materialise, instead I created a further problem of writing too much and created an editing challenge. The standard of my written work gradually improved throughout the journey, recognised by myself and Kevin my supervisor.

## 7.6 FINAL COMMENTS

The aim of this thesis was to acknowledge women's traveller's voices and tourism experiences, in a field where traditionally they have been ignored. Their voices continually link back to their societal, cultural and gendered positions; social dynamics which shape and mould women's relations are present in tourism as they are in other life arenas and are complex and interrelated. Kinnaird and Hall (1994: 200) claimed that any study of Western female travellers is 'fogged with contradiction' due to the cultural, societal and gendered layers of influence upon their lives, which need to be negotiated to reveal their true experiences. There are many kinds of women, from difference cultures, backgrounds, religions, sexualities etc. with fluid attitudes and interpretations. The women in this study are dynamic individuals from many different cultures, whose tourism activities and experiences are analysed to provide a snapshot of independent women's touristic experiences in New Zealand during the summer season 2006-2007. Finally, 'Journeys become the opportunity to acquire experiences that become the basis for the production of identity and are revealed through narratives that emerge from travel

experiences' (Neuman, 1992: 179) they are sources of empowerment, enjoyment and self-fulfilment and positive, rewarding and beneficial experiences to be encouraged in other women of the world.

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