THE SEARCH FOR ‘SELF’ FOR LIFESTYLE TRAVELLERS

SCOTT ALLEN COHEN

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand.

February 27th, 2009
Abstract

This thesis examines the search for self in the context of lifestyle travellers. It has been suggested that maintaining a coherent sense of self has become problematic in late modernity as the socially constructed notion of a ‘true self’ has come to be regarded as concrete, whilst choice has increasingly replaced obligation or tradition as a basis in defining selves. Issues of self have been noted as especially important in the context of adopted lifestyles, as lifestyle can be a means through which individuals seek coherence in their lives. Furthermore, travelling to ‘find one’s self’ has a lengthy tradition in popular literature that has also been reflected in tourism studies where research has been conducted into backpacker and traveller identities.

Lifestyle travel is a post-traditional way of life wherein individuals are voluntarily exposed to an array of cultural praxes. Thus, the literatures on self, lifestyle and tourism point to lifestyle travel as a context where issues of self may be particularly relevant. Whilst there is a significant and growing body of research within tourism studies on backpackers, there is a dearth of information on individuals that travel as a lifestyle. Therefore, this thesis contributes to academic knowledge not only through its investigation into the search for self, but also by its conceptualisation of and empirical research into lifestyle travellers.

With criteria for defining lifestyle travellers based on a fluid combination of self-definition of travel as one’s lifestyle and multiple trips of approximately six months or more, twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out by the researcher with lifestyle travellers in northern Indian and southern Thailand from July through September 2007. In keeping with the paradigmatic ideals of interpretivism, emergent themes were identified from within the qualitative material including meanings that the lifestyle travellers attached to the search for self, surrounding issues of avoidance and seeking that influenced why they travelled as a lifestyle and their future travel intentions.

Although there were multiple perspectives on how the search for self was conceived and approached, searching for self was voiced as a critical motivating factor for the majority of the lifestyle travellers. With a common view among most of the respondents of self as an internal object to be developed, many lifestyle travellers had been or were still on a Romantic modern quest of searching for their true self. Escapism, freedom and learning through challenge were identified as important themes surrounding the search for self, as lifestyle travellers described varying degrees of success in escaping their home societies and finding increased free space and time to learn about and challenge their ideas of self. Paradoxically,
most of the lifestyle travellers sought to experience an inner self that dominant sociological views posit does not exist. The tension of searching for a unified sense of self in a world of relational selves is highlighted as not only problematic for the interviewees, but also for previous tourism studies that have premised their contributions on the existence of an inner self.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express thanks to my supervisors, Associate Professor Neil Carr and Professor James Higham for their invaluable support, direction and feedback throughout the last three years. In addition to his role as my primary supervisor, I would like to further thank Associate Professor Neil Carr for his professional guidance since 2003 when he was one of my lecturers during coursework for my Masters degree at the University of Queensland. Beginning in Australia and since joining Neil across the ditch in New Zealand, he has always been generous with me through research assistant work and teaching opportunities (thanks for the years of putting bread on my table!) and has been an ardent supporter of my academic endeavours.

I would like to thank the Department of Tourism at the University of Otago, where under the care of our Head of Department and my co-supervisor Professor James Higham and our Departmental Manager Diana Evans, what could have simply been a thesis has instead been an unforgettable PhD experience. Moreover, I am grateful to the University of Otago for three years of funding through a Prestigious PhD Scholarship, without which I might still be wandering around India myself. I also extend gratitude to the external editors and reviewers that have helped to bring two book chapters based on this research to fruition.

I am thankful to my loving parents, whose hard work made it possible for me to attend graduate school and have always been beacons of support despite many years of oceans standing between us. I would also like to thank my partner, Claire, both for being with me throughout the ups and downs and her patience while I was away on fieldwork. And of course, my extensive gratitude is given to the lifestyle travellers who gave their time and energy to our discussions. Happy travels.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents...................................................................................................................... v
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ viii
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................ ix

Chapter One – Introduction .................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Rationale for the thesis ..................................................................................................... 1
  1.3 What is a lifestyle traveller? ............................................................................................. 3
  1.4 Introducing the fieldwork sites ......................................................................................... 5
  1.5 Main research question and key aims ............................................................................... 6
  1.6 Underlying paradigm and locating the researcher ............................................................ 6
  1.7 Organisation of the thesis ................................................................................................. 7

Chapter Two – Theoretical perspectives surrounding the search for self .......................... 9
  2.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 9
  2.2 Self and identity .............................................................................................................. 11
  2.3 The inner self as historically situated ............................................................................. 14
  2.4 Self-actualisation ............................................................................................................ 17
  2.5 A relational self .............................................................................................................. 18
  2.6 Self as a linguistic construction ...................................................................................... 19
  2.7 A tension between late modernity and the search for self .............................................. 22
  2.8 Trying to maintain a coherent sense of self ..................................................................... 25
  2.9 Self within tourism studies ............................................................................................. 27
  2.10 Escapism ....................................................................................................................... 30
      2.10.1 Escaping a ‘paramount reality’ ............................................................................. 33
  2.11 Freedom in leisure ........................................................................................................ 33
      2.12 Travel’s promise of freedom ...................................................................................... 36
      2.12.1 The liminoid through tourism .............................................................................. 37
  2.13 Self-insight through challenge ...................................................................................... 39
      2.13.1 Flow experience ..................................................................................................... 41
  2.14 Searching for authenticity ............................................................................................. 43
      2.14.1 Existential authenticity .......................................................................................... 46
  2.15 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 48
Chapter Three – Conceptualising ‘lifestyle travellers’ ....................................................... 51
  3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 51
  3.2 A hypothetical traveller/tourist divide ............................................................................ 52
    3.2.1 Anti-tourism in the construction of traveller identities ........................................... 53
    3.2.2 But is there a difference between the tourist and traveller roles? ......................... 54
  3.3 From drifter to backpacker and beyond ....................................................................... 56
    3.3.1 The drifter ideal ....................................................................................................... 59
    3.3.2 Attempts at a less pejorative term than ‘drifter’...................................................... 60
    3.3.3 The growth of backpacking and backpacker research ............................................ 62
    3.3.4 The institutionalisation of backpacking ................................................................... 63
    3.3.5 Backpacker heterogeneity........................................................................................ 64
  3.4 Travel as a way of life .................................................................................................... 65
  3.5 Travel in the context of lifestyle theory .......................................................................... 67
  3.6 Summary ......................................................................................................................... 70

Chapter Four – Methodology ................................................................................................ 71
  4.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 73
  4.2 Methodological framework ............................................................................................ 73
  4.3 General method employed.............................................................................................. 74
  4.4 Background of the researcher ......................................................................................... 75
  4.5 Inclusion criteria ............................................................................................................. 76
  4.6 Why northern India and southern Thailand? .................................................................. 78
  4.7 Procedures for interviewing ........................................................................................... 81
  4.8 Respondent demographics .............................................................................................. 85
  4.9 Interpretation of the empirical material .......................................................................... 86
  4.10 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 88

Chapter Five – Escapism, freedom and learning through challenge ................................. 90
  5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 90
  5.2 Escapism ......................................................................................................................... 91
    5.2.1 Escaping a perceived anomie in their home societies ............................................. 91
    5.2.2 Escaping the mundane of ‘everyday life’ ................................................................ 93
    5.2.3 Escaping the pressures of family and peer groups .................................................. 95
    5.2.4 Escaping personal problems ................................................................................... 97
    5.2.5 The changing role of escapism ................................................................................ 98
  5.3 Perceiving freedom ......................................................................................................... 99
    5.3.1 First finding freedom ............................................................................................. 101
    5.3.2 Freedom on the road ............................................................................................. 102
    5.3.3 More space and time to reflect .............................................................................. 104
    5.3.4 Freedom as a state of mind ................................................................................... 107
    5.3.5 Seeing through the illusion of freedom ................................................................. 109
  5.4 Learning through challenge .......................................................................................... 112
List of Figures

Figure 4.1  Fieldwork sites in northern India ................................................................. 82
Figure 4.2  Fieldwork sites in southern Thailand ............................................................ 82
List of Tables

Table 4.1  Key characteristics of individual respondents........................................................ 86
Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers. As such, the thesis is centrally focused on the search for self, with lifestyle travellers as the context in which self-searching is examined. While links between travel and concepts of ‘personhood’ have been drawn in tourism scholarship (Desforges 2000), there is a dearth of information on the concept of searching for ‘self’ through travel, as well as a general research gap concerning individuals that travel as a lifestyle. Thus, the present study breaks new ground in both conceptualising lifestyle travellers, as based on extended and repeated temporal engagement with travel, and on examining the search for self within the context of lifestyle travellers. Through its conceptual review of the literature surrounding the search for self and a qualitative approach that has generated empirical findings with lifestyle travellers encountered in India and Thailand during fieldwork in 2007, the thesis is intended to contribute to academic knowledge by investigating the meanings and importance that individuals may attach to searching for self, and on a broader level, travel as a lifestyle.

As this chapter is intended to provide an overview of the research topic, it turns next to establishing the rationale for the thesis. As such, the reader is first presented the reasons why the search for self is an important topic to investigate amongst lifestyle travellers and lifestyle travellers are introduced as a justifiable and identifiable corpus for research. Next, the fieldwork sites are introduced and the main research question and its key aims are set forth. The underlying paradigm of the research is then established and my own presence as the researcher is located. Finally, the organisation of the remaining chapters in the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Rationale for the thesis

The rationale for research into the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers is based on a number of reasons, beginning with the assertion expanded upon in Sections 2.7 and 2.8 that maintaining a coherent sense of self has become increasingly problematic in late modernity (Gergen 1991, Giddens 1991). As shown in Section 3.5, issues of self have been noted as especially topical for individuals who have adopted post-traditional lifestyles (Giddens 1991), with lifestyle travel arguably being one example. Moreover, there have been
a number of studies within the field of tourism that have pointed to self as an important organising factor in the discourse of backpackers and travellers (see Section 2.9).

It has been noted that searching for self is pervasive in modern societies as many Western individuals seek an idea of self that reflects unity and purpose (McAdams 1997). Giddens (1991, p.201) suggested that “underlying the most thoroughgoing processes of life-planning is the looming threat of personal meaninglessness.” However, Baumeister (1986) pointed out that seeking a coherent sense of self has become increasingly problematic in modern Western societies as the abstract and historically constructed idea of a ‘true inner self’ has come to be regarded as concrete, while social organisation has also changed so that choice has increasingly replaced obligation or tradition as a basis in self-definition (Cote & Levine 2002). As globalisation has exposed individuals to a growing range of persons, relationships and opportunities through new ‘socialising technologies’ (Gergen 1991), many Western individuals have become forced to negotiate their ideas of self among an increasing diversity of options (Giddens 1991). Indeed, as travel to multiple destinations over extended periods of time affords increased exposure to an array of cultural praxes and ways of life, it seems that macro sociological trends have pointed towards travel as a context where searching for a more coherent sense of self may be an important issue.

It has been stressed that issues of self are especially important in the context of adopted lifestyles (Giddens 1991). Veal (1993, p.247) has suggested that lifestyle can be defined as “the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group” and that lifestyle can be a means through which individuals seek coherence in their lives. Moreover, Giddens (1991) noted that as traditional identity roles have broken down in modernity, lifestyle choice has become critical in the (re)constitution of self. Giddens (1991) further observed that the more post-traditional the setting within which an individual operates, the more lifestyle concerns self. Thus, as lifestyle has been suggested as particularly significant to individuals engaged in ‘alternative’ ways of life (Metcalf 1995), lifestyle travel, as a decidedly post-traditional way of life undertaken by relatively few individuals, is again indicated as a fomentive context for studying issues of self.

In regards to tourism studies, travelling to ‘find one’s self’ has a lengthy tradition in popular literature (Goeldner & Ritchie 2006) that has also been reflected in academic scholarship. Indeed, Richards and King (2003) suggested that, as a basic travel motive, some backpackers were attempting to ‘find themselves’, Cohen (1996) noted self-actualisation as an intrinsic motive for travel and Neumann (1992, p.182) held that “moments of travel provide a context for entering into other levels of being and belonging to the world that activate latent or potential dimensions of self.” While, as discussed in Section 2.9, these last researchers
overtly depicted an essentialist perspective on self, other tourism studies have instead considered selves in the context of backpacker and traveller identities. Davidson (2005, p.31) has observed that the contemporary scholarship on backpackers and travellers is largely united by a desire to understand how these individuals “incorporate their travelling experiences into their own conception of self-identity.” Hence, there is a significant body of research that points to the relevance and importance of investigating the meanings that individuals may assign to self in the context of backpacking/travelling.

1.3 What is a lifestyle traveller?

Whilst there is a growing body of research within tourism studies on the tourist sub-type that has come to be known as ‘backpackers’ (Hannam & Ateljevic 2008), there has been a significant research gap resulting from individuals that travel as a lifestyle having been almost completely overlooked in previous backpacker/tourist studies. A common theme amongst many backpacker studies has been to suggest an institutionalisation or ‘mainstreaming’ of the backpacking phenomenon as the industry has become increasingly commoditised (Cohen 2004, O’Reilily 2006). However, in response to studies that have largely treated backpackers as a homogenous segment (for instance Muzaini 2006, O’Reilily 2006), there has been an increasing number of works that have attempted to highlight heterogeneity within the backpacker label (see Section 3.3.5).

Moreover, Sørensen (2003) has suggested that the heterogeneity of the backpacking market justifies further research into its specific sub-types as it is evident that niches exist within backpacker culture (Nash 2001). While Sørensen’s (2003) work touched upon short-term backpackers as a sub-type, other studies have focused on ‘long-term travellers’, as individuals that are backpacking for a year or more (Elsrud 2001, Riley 1988). Furthermore, whilst Riley’s (1988) work is often cited as if it represents backpackers in general, Sørensen (2003, p.849) has cautioned that the time factor of one year “disqualifies most present-day backpackers, and the ability to represent all backpackers by means of Riley’s findings is thus doubtful” as her findings are more representative of “a hard-core sub-segment.”

Cohen (2004) has noted that systematic research has not been undertaken on ‘contemporary drifters’, described as those travellers most closely reflecting Cohen’s (1972) drifting ideal, who based on a higher level of involvement in travel may seek to distinguish themselves from contemporary backpackers. While most backpackers perceive their travels as a time out from their ‘normal’ life-path and expect to rejoin the workforce in their home societies (Elsrud 2001, Riley 1988), including many individuals who are backpacking for
more than one year (Wilson 2006), few view travel as a feasible alternative to a conventional
minority being on the road becomes a preferred way of life to which they will return
whenever the opportunity presents itself.” Moreover, within her study, Riley (1988) noted
that there were a small number of individuals who treated leisure travel more or less as a
career.

Noy and Cohen (2005, p.3) have suggested that for some individuals backpacking can
cease to be a transitional phase and can extend to “a way of life in itself.” While Uriely,
Yonay and Simchai (2002) remarked that some individuals may return to backpacking
‘serially’, direct research has not been conducted into individuals that have taken multiple
extended backpacking trips, and as such, have had the opportunity to reflect on their trips
outside of the travel context and have elected to continue travel as a lifestyle. In Wilson’s
(2006) work, she noted that individuals who had returned home from travel had reflected on
their travel experiences and were able to give complex answers on the reasons for their travels
whereas individuals in the midst of their first extended trips were less sure of their
motivations. Hence, individuals who have had the opportunity to reflect post-travel may be
able to give valuable insights on why they repeatedly return to a travel lifestyle.

Noy and Cohen (2005) have held that ‘lifelong wanderers’ are difficult to locate and
have rarely been the subject of research. Not only does this thesis begin to address
individuals reflective of this research gap, but it also introduces a less pejorative term for
these individuals who travel as a lifestyle choice. Rather than deprecatory terms that
preceded the notion of the ‘backpacker’ (Riley 1988), such as ‘drifter’ (Cohen 1972) and
‘wanderer’ (Vogt 1976), which have historically been used to describe individuals with a
higher level of involvement in travel and have since been repackaged as ‘contemporary
drifters’ (Cohen 2004) and ‘lifelong wanderers’ (Noy & Cohen 2005), I suggest the less
derogative term of ‘lifestyle traveller’. As ‘travellers’, as they commonly self-define
themselves (Richards & Wilson 2003), and as adherents to a lifestyle group marked by
repeated and extended temporal commitment to travel, involving its own ideologies, praxes
and identities, lifestyle travellers represent an identifiable, yet previously overlooked, corpus
for research within the backpacker market. Whilst Section 3.4 provides an in-depth
conceptual discussion that leads to the generation of a definition for lifestyle travellers, it is
noted here that lifestyle travellers, as a sub-type of backpackers, are individuals who
repeatedly return to long-term travel and consider travel to be their way of life.

As a focus for inquiry, examining the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers
will not only provide direct insights into issues of self, but can also identify surrounding
themes that may influence the search for self, and on a wider level, help to explain the meanings that individuals may attach to travel as a lifestyle. As such, this study makes an effort to both directly explore the concept of searching for self, but also more generally, surrounding seeking and avoidance behaviours within lifestyle travel. As Iso-Ahola (1982) suggested, the rewards that individuals may hope to derive from leisure travel are part of a two-fold process of avoidance and seeking.

1.4 Introducing the fieldwork sites

The empirical material for the thesis was generated through semi-structured in-depth interviewing with lifestyle travellers in northern India and southern Thailand from July through September 2007. Although lifestyle travellers are spread through many regions of the world, northern India and southern Thailand offered fieldwork sites with established gathering points for conveniently accessing lifestyle travellers. The suitability of India and Thailand as fieldwork sites was determined based on my own personal experiences of meeting a significant number of lifestyle travellers in both India and Thailand on previous trips and literature that has pointed towards India and Thailand as likely sites for encountering lifestyle travellers (see Section 4.6).

Since serving as a primary destination in the overland hippie trail followed by hundreds of thousands of young countercultural Westerners in the late 1960s and early 1970s, India has been represented as an important site for budget overland travel (Davidson 2005), a ‘challenging’ destination for more experienced travellers (Richards & Wilson 2003) and as a pinnacle for ‘alternative’ lifestyles (Tomory 1996). Additionally, Thailand has a lengthy reputation as an attractive destination for lifestyle travellers, especially as its relaxed island bungalow tourism and outdoor parties have served to attract ‘drifters’ for decades (Cohen 1982, Westerhausen 2002). As this section has now given the background for the study by introducing lifestyle travellers as an overlooked corpus for research, establishing why the search for self is a particularly relevant concept to research within the context of lifestyle travellers and locating India and Thailand as the fieldwork sites, the chapter now turns to providing the reader with the study’s main research question and its key aims.
1.5 Main research question and key aims

The thesis has three subsidiary aims that are linked to the main research question. The main research question is: What is the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers? As part of investigating this question, the three key aims to be addressed are:

1) To identify the meanings that lifestyle travellers attach to the search for self.

2) To identify issues surrounding the search for self that may influence why individuals travel as a lifestyle.

3) To consider the future travel intentions of lifestyle travellers and how these intentions may be influenced by the search for self.

The scope of the main research question and its three aims allows for an empirical investigation directly into the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers and parallel inquiry into surrounding issues of avoidance and seeking that may influence self-searching and help to explain on a broader level why individuals travel as a lifestyle. Additionally, consideration of the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers provides a greater understanding of how the meanings that the individuals have attributed to lifestyle travel may have changed since they began travelling and may continue changing over time. Furthermore, the selection of lifestyle travellers as the context for investigating the search for self necessitates a conceptual introduction of lifestyle travellers to tourism scholarship.

1.6 Underlying paradigm and locating the researcher

As the thesis is focused on making sense of the subjective meanings that lifestyle travellers construct through travel, it is assumed that social action is meaningful. As Lincoln & Guba (2003, p.296) noted:

From an interpretivist point of view, what distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful. Thus, to understand a particular social action (e.g., friendship, voting, marrying, teaching), the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action.
Therefore, as an attempt to better understand an aspect of the social world by getting “inside the heads” (O’Reilly K. 2005, p.49) of lifestyle travellers, this research is a qualitative inquiry aligned with the paradigmatic ideals of interpretivism. Within interpretivism, it is openly recognised that social knowledge is an interactive and situationally constrained process shaped by both the researcher and those being researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

Consequently, the empirical work with lifestyle travellers for this study is contextualised (O’Reilly K. 2005) and thus a socially-situated co-creation between the observed lifestyle travellers and me (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). As such, my personal history, which not only includes my socio-cultural background, but also several years as a lifestyle traveller myself, has influenced my interest in, choice of and approach to the research topic, as well as having played an ongoing influence in the interpretation of the empirical material and the construction of the text. But while I openly locate my presence as researcher (Jennings 2005) and correspondingly invoke the use of the active voice at times in this thesis (Phillimore & Goodson 2004), the aims of the study do not provide scope for an in-depth reflexive account to be continually exercised throughout the text.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

As the first of two conceptual chapters, Chapter Two is a review of the theoretical perspectives surrounding the search for self. The chapter examines the literature on self and surrounding themes that tourism and leisure scholarship have identified as important to avoidance and seeking-behaviours in leisure travel. Correspondingly, the chapter begins by delineating the notions of self and identity and then exercises a historical approach in conceptualising self as relational and fluid rather than as an inner essence. These opposing perspectives on self are used to set the stage for considering self as a problematic concept in late modernity. Following the section on self, the chapter considers the themes of escapism, freedom, seeking insight through challenge and the search for authenticity as concepts suggested as underpinning avoidance and seeking-behaviours in leisure travel that may also influence the search for self.

Chapter Three provides a conceptual underpinning that justifies lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research. It begins with a critical look at the historical traveller/tourist divide and examines the role of anti-tourism in the construction of traveller identities. Afterwards, the chapter traces the traveller concept over time from Cohen’s (1972) drifter as an idealised model for the modern backpacker through to the current state of backpacker scholarship. This illustrates a historical basis from which lifestyle travel has emerged and
situates lifestyle travel in relation to contemporary theory on backpacker tourism. Finally, travel as a way of life is considered in the context of lifestyle theory, which further serves to delineate lifestyle travellers as a lifestyle group and corpus for research.

Chapter Four is focused on the methodology and method used in the thesis. The chapter begins by discussing the methodological framework employed in the study, including the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that flow out of the project’s grounding in the paradigm of interpretivism. Next, the method of the study, as semi-structured in-depth interviewing is discussed in light of previous related works. The chapter then turns to my own background as a lifestyle traveller before establishing the inclusion criteria for the study and providing a further examination of northern India and southern Thailand as the study’s fieldwork sites. Finally, the chapter details the procedures that were undertaken in conducting the interviews, summarises the respondents’ demographics and describes how the empirical material was interpreted.

Chapter Five looks at surrounding themes raised by the respondents that they considered as important motivations for their engagement in lifestyle travel, yet were also linked to searching for self. These themes include the roles of escapism, freedom and learning through challenge. Not only are each of these themes weighed in terms of the respondents’ perceptions of them as potential reasons for why they travelled as lifestyle, but also their respective linkages to the search for self are explored.

Following on from themes surrounding the search for self, Chapter Six interprets the meanings that the lifestyle travellers directly attributed to the role of the search for self in their travels. It addresses the various perspectives of the respondents, including how the concept of self was conceived, the different ways in which searching for self was approached and changes in the search for self over time. Additionally, the study’s findings on authenticity are examined in reference to competing discourses on self. Furthermore, for those interviewees that perceived that they had been or were still searching for self, the chapter looks at how successful or not the interviewees judged themselves in their respective endeavours. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with a discussion of the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers, with attention given to how their plans may have been influenced by searching for self.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, reviews how each of the research aims have been addressed and then considers the implications of the findings for the broader academic literature. Suggestions for further research are provided.
Chapter Two – Theoretical perspectives surrounding the search for self

2.1 Introduction

As this thesis is focused on the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers, this chapter reviews literature surrounding the search for self. While the chapter is fundamentally about the concept of ‘self’, it also examines the scholarship related to seeking-behaviour in the context of leisure travel, including the concepts of freedom, insight through challenge and authenticity, as each of these latter concepts have been linked to self and seeking in the literature. However, Iso-Ahola (1982) suggested that the rewards that individuals may hope to derive from leisure and tourism may not only arise from a process of seeking, but also are dependent on a notion of avoidance or escape. Hence, the chapter additionally highlights contexts from which individuals may attempt escape, so as to consider how avoidance may be linked to searching for self.

The chapter begins by delineating the notions of self and identity. A historical approach is then used to conceptualise self as relational and fluid rather than an inner essence waiting to be realised. Moreover, the review of historical orientations to the self sets the stage for considering self as a problematic concept in late modern Western societies (Baumeister 1986), wherein a tension may exist for individuals who seek to develop a coherent sense of self among an increasing array of life options. Discourse on the self is then applied in the context of leisure travel, where the literature has drawn upon both self and identity theories originating from social psychology and sociology to help explain tourism and leisure motivations. As the search for self is conceptualised as a modern quest, this review not only examines self from a modernist perspective, but also considers its discussions in light of poststructural discourses that have attempted to deconstruct the validity of these seeking-behaviours.

Following the section on self, the discussion shifts to the notion of escape, with a particular focus on what the literature has said individuals attempt to escape from. The section addresses both the desire to escape aspects of one’s social environment, as well as to escape perceived aspects of one’s individual self. The chapter then considers escape from the perspective of what individuals may be trying to escape to or seek.

The romanticist notion of individual freedom has been commonly cited within tourism and leisure studies as a determinant of participant satisfaction and as an object of seeking-behaviour (Neulinger 1981, Riley 1988). Moreover, freedom has been suggested as a
precursor to the ability to ‘develop’ one’s sense of self (Jamieson 1996), and as such, discourse on ‘perceived freedom’ has paralleled discussions of escape within tourism and leisure studies. Freedom from in order to have freedom to has been an ongoing narrative in the modern body of literature, such as exhibited by Roberts (1978, p.86):

In recreation and other spheres the public uses its leisure to nurture life-styles that supply experiences which the individuals concerned seek and value. ‘Freedom from’ is a condition for leisure. But there is also a positive side of the coin that involves individuals exploiting their ‘freedom to’.

In addition to the idea that individuals may attempt escape in order to find freedom, including a freedom to search for self, the chapter examines narratives that place this freedom within the context of seeking self-insight through challenge. There is a considerable body of literature within leisure, recreation and tourism that has posited that self-insight or knowledge can be gained through the negotiation of ‘risky situations’ (Walle 1997, Weber 2001). Challenging and adventurous situations have been represented as fomentive of experiential states through which individuals may temporarily escape self-consciousness and re-emerge with a ‘stronger’ sense of self (Csikszentmihalyi 1975).

Finally, the focus of the chapter turns to the concept of authenticity as, particularly within modern tourism studies (MacCannell 1976), the search for authenticity has been suggested as a primary travel motivation. However, whereas authenticity has been traditionally used within tourism scholarship to describe the search for authentic toured objects, recent research critical of this approach has instead called for authenticity to be conceptualised in terms of a search for an ‘authentic self’ (Steiner & Reisinger 2006, Wang 1999). As such, it seems that the seminal authenticity debate within tourism has come to resemble the wider notion of searching for self. In fact, Macbeth (2000, p.23) neatly summarised how a number of threads within tourism can be tied back to the idea of self:

But in the sweep of thinking from MacCannell’s (1976) search for authenticity through to nature and adventure-based tourism for personal growth and development, there is an underlying utopian ideal – people are looking for something more and better in their lives, something that enlivens, enriches who they are.

Thus, seeking-behaviour within leisure travel, whether related to escape, freedom, insight through challenge or authenticity, appears to be centrally linked to the modern quest of searching for self. In order to better understand how the discourses surrounding escape, freedom, challenge and authenticity have been represented within tourism and leisure studies,
and as such, help to inform a conceptual understanding of searching for self through lifestyle travel, it is first necessary to grapple with the concepts of self and identity.

2.2 Self and identity

Self and identity are vast and complicated concepts with a significant recent history in both popular and scientific discourse (Ashmore & Jussim 1997). However, Seigel (2005, p.3) has noted that “few ideas are both as weighty and slippery as the notion of self,” and this is evident in that over 31,000 publications on self and identity have emerged in social psychology in the last two decades (Ashmore & Jussim 1997, Vaughan & Hogg 2002). This number does not even include research from sociology and anthropology, where self and identity are commonly analysed as collective phenomena from the macro perspectives of society and culture, in contrast to social psychology, where the unit of analysis for self and identity has typically been micro, starting with the individual self (Cote & Levine 2002, Dann 1981, Vaughan & Hogg 2002).

Micro versus macro approaches across academic disciplines and outside of academia have meant that the words ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are often used in very different ways, yet also sometimes used to describe what seems to be similar phenomena (Ashmore & Jussim 1997). Ashmore and Jussim (1997, p.5) suggested of self and identity:

These words point to large, amorphous, and changing phenomena that defy hard and fast definitions, though individual researchers and practitioners of particular disciplines do operate according to widely accepted conceptual and operational definitions.

Moreover, Seigel (2005) noted that the terms ‘self’ and ‘identity’ may sometimes be distinguished from each other, but their permeability as concepts also allows them to sometimes merge into each other. The idea of self in its own right is historically a relatively new idea (Vaughan & Hogg 2002), as the word ‘self’ first appeared as a noun in the English language at the beginning of the fourteenth century (Danziger 1997). In regards to identity, Ashmore and Jussim (1997) contended that Goffman (1959) was the first to use the word ‘identity’ in place of ‘self’, however, it has been noted that in the seventeenth century, John Locke used ‘personal identity’ and ‘self’ interchangeably (Danziger 1997, Seigel 2005).

Aimed at providing a simple definition of self, Gergen (1991, p.x) suggested that self refers to “our ways of understanding who we are and what we are about.” Seigel (2005, p.3) held that self commonly refers to “the particular being any person is.” Moreover, Cote and
Levine (2002, p.88) suggested that self refers to “a person’s internalized behavioural repertoires,” which can be the object of social experience. However, in addition to social meanings, Baumeister (1991) emphasised that as embodied individuals, the self of course includes the physical body. Ashmore and Jussim (1997) have suggested that the self as subject can be differentiated from the self as object, a distinction between ‘I’ and ‘me’ pointed out by William James in 1890, reflecting respectively, ‘self as knower’ and ‘self as known’. Or as McAdams (1997, p.63) put: “Identity is the story that the modern I constructs and tells about the me.”

In this light, identity can be understood as the sum of reflections on the subjective experience of embodied self (Cote & Levine 2002), or as “a self-understanding or self-objectification to which one is emotionally attached” (Holland 1997, p.162). As Baumeister (1986, p.4) put, “an identity is a definition, an interpretation, of the self.” From more of a social constructionist perspective, however, identities have been described as temporary points of attachment to subject positions constructed through discursive practices (Hall 1996). Vaughan and Hogg (2002, p.90) noted that identities:

have their origins in the vast array of different relationships that form, or have formed, the anchoring points for our lives – ranging from close personal relationships with friends and family, through relationships and roles defined by work groups and professions, to relationships defined by ethnicity, race and nationality.

In addressing collective versus individuals identities, Breathnach (2006, p.113) summarised that identities are “neither wholly collective nor individual, but are formed in the interaction between the individual and the subject positions available to them through discourse.” In a similar vein of having attempted to merge micro and macro approaches, Giddens (1991) even combined the terms as ‘self-identity’.

Although self and identity have been used both interchangeably or distinguished as separate concepts in the academic literature, for the purpose of this thesis self and identity are used separately, but understood as linked concepts. Self is defined in this thesis as an individual’s subjective experience of who they are, whereas identity is accepted here as subject positions constructed through discursive practices. Thus, while an individual’s sense of self is necessarily constructed through discursive subject positions, self is delineated in this study as a subjective perception rather than a set of social identifications.

However, in regards to differentiating and defining self and identity, Seigel (2005, p.17) noted: “Questions about the self are not about whether some term best names what is essential to it…Concern about the self is concern about how we put the diverse parts of our personal
being together into some kind of whole.” Indeed, concern about the self seems to be widespread in contemporary Western society, further evidenced by the suggestion that “the theme of self dominates recent trends in our culture” (Baumeister 1991, p.6). Seigel (2005) noted that the modern West has made concerns about individuality and selfhood more important to its own self-definition than any other world culture. It appears that the starting point for self as an area of concern is the deeply ingrained view in modern Western thought of “human beings as self-contained unitary individuals who carry their uniqueness deep inside themselves, like pearls hidden in their shells” waiting to be found (Burkitt 1991, p.1). Even though the notion of an ‘inner self’ as an object that can be developed or found (Maslow 1971) has been thoroughly contested by the academe, as is discussed later in this section, the modern view of the self as a developmental project still pervades much of Western society (Baumeister 1986).

It is important to note before proceeding in this discussion of self that a Western approach to conceptualising self represents “a product of a singular configuration of religious, social, and scientific institutions and ideologies that have historically crystallized into an arrangement of notions that is constitutive of the Western self” (D’Andrea 2007b, p.112). D’Andrea (2007b, p.112) further noted that the Western self is a “hyperindividualized entity forged under the authoritarian orientation of Judeo-Christian monotheism (this history is expanded upon in Section 2.3), whereas non-Western, or ‘Eastern’, understandings of self constructed under different cultural histories have constituted differing ways of understanding self. As such, Western ways of thinking about self are culturally contingent and it is necessary to recognise that Eastern cultures, which are often characterised by a more collectivist understanding of self, offer other views of self.

Nonetheless, Eastern approaches to understanding self have been appropriated by the West, as is discussed through the notion of ‘Orientalism’ (Said 1978). Orientalism highlights how cultural ideas can both describe and exert control on other cultures (Said 1978). Such can be argued to be the case with Western appropriations of Eastern understandings of self, in which ‘traditional’ Eastern philosophies such as those offered through Zen Buddhism or yoga are interwoven with Western understandings and mobilised for consumption. Indeed, the appeal of Eastern cultures can be partially attributed to the mystique offered through these different philosophies and ways of knowing, a topic that is expanded upon in Section 4.6 when discussing how Western travellers may be induced to travel to Asia.

In returning to how Western understandings of self have historically been presented in the academic literature, the idea of an essentialist or inner self in fact reflects only one way in which researchers have attempted to broadly conceptualise self (Seigel 2005). Seigel (2005)
has suggested that Western selfhood has been conceptualised primarily along three inter-twining dimensions: the bodily or material, the relational, and the reflective. As mentioned above, our self is of course housed in the body (Baumeister 1991), a corporeal existence from which we experience the body’s physical needs and inclinations (Seigel 2005). But there is also a relational level to the self that arises from social and cultural interactions that give us collective identities, shared values and language (Seigel 2005). The relational dimension is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, as recent research on self has tended to emphasise a relational self over the heavily scrutinised notion of a reflective self (McAdams 1997). The reflective self, which includes the notion of an inner self, signifies the human capacity to put “ourselves at a distance from our own being” and to “turn a kind of mirror” on our body, social interactions and consciousness, and try to “examine, judge, and sometimes regulate or revise it” (Seigel 2005, p.5).

The reflective self has not only been conceptualised as increasingly problematic in Western society (Gergen 1991), but more radical approaches have even attempted to deconstruct the entire notion of an inner self by showing how the idea of an essential inner self has been historically and socially constructed (Foucault 1988). Hence, the next part of this section looks at the Western historical construction of an inner self, or ‘true self’, and examines how this process has led to the problematic modern assertion that the potential of this self should be actualised. In this sense, self is assigned a historical status rather than a natural one, thus allowing for it to be understood as culturally and socially situated (Danziger 1997). As Danziger (1997, p.139) put: “The self’s features cannot be independent of historically changing ways of describing and relating to it.”

2.3 The inner self as historically situated

In order to understand why modern discourse has represented the individual self as having an inner quality, that is natural and almost objectifiable, and thus, able to be found and its potential actualised (Maslow 1971), it is necessary to retrace the historical status of self in Western society (Danziger 1997). The idea of the human as a unique individual is expressed in the notion of individuality (Baumeister 1986). While the development of the individual had been encouraged during Greek civilisation, the Roman Empire instead focused on collective and utilitarian social applications (Veal & Lynch 2001). Later, during the Middle Age in medieval Europe, individuality had been largely suppressed as individuals tried to conform to the common Christian ideals set by a rigidly structured society (Baumeister 1986, 1991). The primary determinants of identity were then fixed by birth and included lineage,
gender, home and social class (Baumeister 1986). In this historical stage, the word ‘self’ emerged with negative connotations, as individuality was connected to sin (Danziger 1997). Further evidence that little emphasis was put on the individual during this time is found in the scarcity of biographies, and the non-existence of autobiographies, written during this period (Baumeister 1986).

Near the end of the Middle Age, the Renaissance is credited with expanding on the notion of individuality (Simmel 1971). Gradually, Western individuals began to feel that their identity was less determined by family descent, and as such, the definition of identity shifted from a collective model to more of an individual basis (Baumeister 1986). In the seventeenth century, Descartes famous line ‘I think, therefore I am’ set a philosophical basis for a reflective self (Seigel 2005). Later that century, John Locke’s controversial Essay Concerning Human Understanding described personal identity in secular terms, and as such, attempted to replace the idea of a spiritual soul with a ‘this-worldly’ conception of self (Danziger 1997). The Lockean conception of the self posited that a human is born with her/his mind as a blank slate, or tabula rasa, from which the self, as fixed in the body, is then based on a continuity of consciousness (Danziger 1997, Seigel 2005). Locke set the foundation for a positive valuation of self that conceived of self as internal and objectifiable, which contributed to an empiricist understanding of the self over the next two centuries as a worldly phenomenon to be analysed and known (Danziger 1997).

As individuals became less content with Christian versions of how life should be constructed, an ongoing shift from soul to positive connotations of a private self reflected a desire “to try out new models of human fulfilment,” that would take place while the individual was living, rather than in an afterlife (Baumeister 1986, p.59, Vaughan & Hogg 2002). As the secularised self had been conceptualised as a private “object of variable worth,” the aspiration of increasing or maintaining its worth came “to be regarded as an identifiable human motive” (Danziger 1997, p.145). Gradually, Western society’s fascination with how each person could be unique and different developed into the expectation that each person ought to strive to be a special individual (Baumeister 1986, 1991). Moreover, the increasing tendency towards individualism meant individuals became more likely to describe themselves in terms of internal characteristics that might make them unique from others, such as personality, rather than in terms of their collective affiliations with other people (Ward et al. 2001).

Thus, the early modern period gave the individual a foundation for conceptual separation from the social order (Baumeister 1986), which led to a strong sense of individualism in the Western consciousness during the Romantic era at the start of the late.
eighteenth century (Simmel 1971). During the nineteenth century, it became increasingly common for individuals to separate public and private domains of life, a step which laid the basis for seeing the self in conflict with society (Baumeister 1986). Thus, the Romantic era continued the notion that each individual contained an inner, natural self that was distinct from society (Leed 1991), but added that each person could choose their own forms of potential to fulfil, instead of accepting a fixed societal role (Baumeister 1986).

With a view of society as oppressive to the individual, Romantics placed a high value on the idea of freedom and searched for new models of secular human fulfilment (Baumeister 1986). This was evidenced by the growth of utopian experiments in the nineteenth century in which Romantics struggled collectively for a reorganisation of society that allowed the individual “freedom to be oneself” (Baumeister 1986, p.69). However, with the relative failure of utopian communities in reorganising society, mid-nineteenth century saw the rise of ‘transcendentalism’, a literary movement where individuals sought fulfilment ‘outside’ of society, primarily within nature (Baumeister 1986, Walle 1997). The transcendental movement popularised the notion that fulfilment was best reached outside of society through communion with nature and influenced ideas on seeking insight and knowledge through adventure (Walle 1997), a topic of discussion in Section 2.13.

Thus, out of the idea that each person might exercise her/his potential to be unique, and that one’s potential is best achieved relatively independently of the social environment, further grew the modern view of an inner self that can be developed or actualised (Maslow 1970, 1971). Alongside a growing belief in the potentiality of the self, there was a decline in Christian faith. As this religion had been responsible for establishing a Western consensus about moral values, the door had been opened to alternative values based on individual choice rather than religious dictates (Baumeister 1986).

With religion’s metacriteria for making decisions destabilised, Western individuals increasingly looked towards their inner self as an inner moral source for direction in life’s choices (Baumeister 1986, McAdams 1997). As McAdams (1997, p.62) summarised: “It becomes especially important in modernity, therefore, to be ‘true’ to one’s self… Modern men and women routinely adopt a developmental rhetoric in making sense of their own lives.” Hence, the modern idea that the self can be improved over the course of one’s life has its underpinnings in the historical notion of an inner self. It is from this basis that humanist ideas such as self-actualisation and self-fulfilment began (Maslow 1970, 1971, McAdams 1997, Rogers 1969).
2.4 Self-actualisation

From within psychology, Maslow (1970, 1971) posited that one’s inner self can be fulfilled or actualised if an individual decides to listen to her/his inner voice at each moment in life. Thus Maslow (1971, p.175) positioned self-actualisation as the final goal in the search for self:

the goal – the goal of education – the human goal, the humanistic goal, the goal so far as human beings are concerned – is ultimately the ‘self-actualization’ of a person, the becoming fully human, the development of the fullest height that the human species can stand up to or that the particular individual can come to.

Moreover, Maslow (1971) suggested that to strive for the goal of self-actualisation, or one’s full development as an individual, is a universal impulse that we all have to improve ourselves. However, Maslow’s (1971) self-actualisation was not without its own moral agenda for the ‘progression’ of society, as he stressed that self-actualisation can be reduced to daily growth or regression choices, wherein decisions leading to self-growth are those characterised as ‘good’ by society – such as honesty and not stealing. As such, self-actualisation was very much about what one ought to do (Danziger 1997).

Furthermore, Maslow (1970) suggested that self-actualising people can be characterised as relatively independent of the social environment, which is reminiscent of transcendentalism. Thus, it seems paradoxical that a person should follow their own ‘inner voice’, yet, the self-actualising choice is the one morally condoned by society. As such, it is clear that a developmental psychology based on self-fulfilment is aimed at not only ‘benefiting’ the individual, but also at ‘advancing’ society. The link between the freedom to listen to one’s self and the advancement of society assumes that when given the opportunity, individuals will universally seek ‘socially appropriate growth’.

However, Baumeister (1986, p.88) warned: “A permissive, individualistic society may enable the gifted few to fulfil their potentialities, but the multitudes may fall into uncertainty and hedonism rather than arduous self-actualization.” Nonetheless, as discussed in Section 2.13, the notion of self-development through the medium of leisure has served as a theoretical starting point in traditional leisure studies (Kuentzel 2000), and as shall also be shown, has helped to shape the discourse of leisure travel. However, before examining how the meta-narrative of self-development has influenced leisure and tourism studies, it is first vital to review how academic thought on self has now moved on to widely challenge the notion of an essentialist self.
2.5 A relational self

Section 2.3 situated the inner self as a historical construction, and in doing so, demonstrated that conceptualising selfhood through a reflective approach is a relatively modern Western invention. In addition to a reflective dimension to self, self is understood as bodily and relational (Seigel 2005). While recent research on self has tended to discredit humanistic perspectives such as self-actualisation and instead focus on the relational dimension of the self, it is important to note that the self was conceptualised as relational in the psychology literature long before developmental psychology pushed the prospect of self-actualisation (Danziger 1997).

As well as having distinguished conceptually between the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ in his psychological discussion of self in the late nineteenth century, William James used medical literature on ‘alternating selves’ as a basis for asserting that the self is shaped by social interaction (Danziger 1997, Vaughan & Hogg 2002). Thus, James has been credited as a ‘common parent’ in psychological and sociological analyses of the self (Ashmore & Jussim 1997). His work was carried on by the sociologists Cooley and Mead in the early twentieth century, who set the stage for conceptualising self as a social phenomenon that is “crafted through linguistic exchanges with others” (Ashmore & Jussim 1997, Harter 1997, p.81). In this sense, the self is derived from incorporating the perceived opinions of other people (Harter 1997). Harter (1997, p.8) explained the social construction of perceived ‘false’ and ‘true’ selves:

Both false and true selves are very personal constructs. However, the false self is experienced as socially implanted against one’s will, and as such it feels foreign. According to symbolic interactionists, the true self is also social in origin, derived from the incorporation of the perceived opinions of significant others. However, one has consciously or unconsciously internalized these messages in a form that the individual comes to own as a personal rendering of the self. Thus, both true and false selves are primarily social in origin, although the true self is experienced as a self-defining core sense of who one really is.

This school of thought, known as ‘symbolic interactionism’, held the basic tenet that an individual’s sense of ‘me’ arises out of social interaction (Vaughan & Hogg 2002). As such, symbolic interactionism proposed that an individual’s “self-conception comes from seeing ourselves as others see us,” an idea known as ‘the looking-glass self’ (Vaughan & Hogg 2002, p.84).

Despite the perspective of symbolic interactionists, psychology from the early to mid-twentieth century was largely dominated by the humanistic approach of self-development
(Danziger 1997). However, theory on the social self was extended by Goffman (1959) in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman (1959) used a theatrical context to conceptualise self as a dramaturgical performance. For Goffman (1959), self was performed on a social stage where individuals attempted to maintain a coherent or ‘appropriate’ performance in the eyes of others and take on different roles for different people, a process likened to ‘impression management’ (Vaughan & Hogg 2002).

Through symbolic interactionism and the dramaturgical metaphors of Goffman (1959), sociology brought to the fore of the discussion on self the idea that “selves are constructed, modified and played out in interaction with other people,” a conclusion with the ramifications that rather than one fixed self, each individual has multiple selves that are contextually dependent (Vaughan & Hogg 2002, p.101). In this sense, the self can be seen as a ‘social strategist’, which is a view that has widely underpinned contemporary work in social psychology (Danziger 1997). From a perspective of social selves, differences between individuals are largely attributed to the social relations that exist between individuals, as opposed to a unique inner self (Burkitt 1991). The acceptance of conceptualising self as relational, or situational (Finnegan 1997), has gained speed with the help of discursive theory, which, as discussed in the next section, is based on Foucauldian understandings of the self as linguistically constructed (Holland 1997).

### 2.6 Self as a linguistic construction

Foucault (1988) furthered deconstruction of a reflective dimension to self by situating it historically in linguistics. A linguistics perspective begins with locating the terms ‘I’ and ‘me’ in a pronomic language system rather than as connected to a unique internal essence (Cohen & Taylor 1992). Through linguistic practice, or what Foucault (1988) referred to as ‘technologies of the self’, individuals were encouraged to learn socially condoned procedures for systematically reflecting upon their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Danziger 1997). While autobiographies were nearly non-existent during the Middle Age (Baumeister 1986), both autobiographies and keeping a personal diary, through which one reflects on one’s own behaviours, have become common modern practices (Danziger 1997). Moreover, both the Catholic practice of confession (Foucault 1988) and an increase in modern popular literary productions that have been preoccupied with the idea of the inner self have been recognised as important technologies of the self (Danziger 1997).

Underpinning the Foucauldian discursive self is the idea that socially sanctioned technologies of the self may vary significantly across different cultures where the
technologies may be instituted and understood in different ways (Danziger 1997). It has recently been identified that the English word ‘self’ cannot even be translated into French or Spanish without its meaning being significantly altered (Danziger 1997). Thus, rather than the modern notion that a ‘true self’ could be slowly and arduously discovered (Cohen & Taylor 1992), discursive theory located the reflective self as culturally contingent, and as such, socially constructed. With the process of introspection understood as constructed through language and part of a specific cultural history, Locke’s assertion that the self is based on the continuity of consciousness is gravely challenged (Danziger 1997). As Beedie (2007, p.40) noted: “The ‘real self’, the search for which is the very cornerstone of Romanticism, does not exist.”

Without an inner self to look inside for, embodied self is reduced to a multitude of relational selves that are contextualised and permeable (Holland 1997). In other words, the reflective dimension of the self is folded or absorbed into the relational dimension (Seigel 2005). In this sense, the search for self would ultimately be fruitless as one’s self-conception is an illusion or mirage. However, the poststructural objection to an inner self is not intended as a nihilistic outlook, quite on the contrary, the idea is “the more selves the merrier” (McAdams 1997, p.51). As Seigel (2005, p.4) explained of the poststructural motivation in exposing the independent self as an illusion: “they did so on behalf of a vision of transcendent freedom that overwhelms the more modest visions of personal integration and regulated autonomy projected by the ideas and practices they sought to supersede.” Thus, while discursive theory deconstructed the idea of ‘liberation’ through self-knowledge (Cohen & Taylor 1992), it also paved the way for increasing possibilities as elicited by Gergen (1991, p.139):

In the postmodern world there is no individual essence to which one remains true or committed. One’s identity is continuously emergent, re-formed, and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of ‘Who am I?’ it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities.

Clearly, a discursive understanding of selves lends considerable capital to sociological perspectives of selves as multiple and fluid (McAdams 1997). However, McAdams (1997, p.47) also warned that “one should not dismiss the possibility that selves nonetheless retain a certain degree of unity and coherence.”

Holland (1997, p.171) noted that two poles with a continuum in between can be seen in contemporary academic discussions of self, with the range including “an extreme essentialist view that pays no attention to the socially positioning power of discourses and an extreme
ephemeralist position that has no interest in the embodied self.” In regards to a Foucauldian view, here described as ephemeral, criticism is launched at the idea that language and culture have total power to “set strict limits to what people are able to think, or deeming consciousness to be so fully constituted by social and cultural relations that mental life becomes a kind of precipitate of collective existence, losing its independence” (Seigel 2005, p.21). While Giddens (1991, p.2) has asserted that “the self is not a passive entity,” on the other hand, to attribute the individual a ‘total freedom’ from the power of discourse would be to far overstate the case (Finnegan 1997).

In contrast, it has been suggested that the difficulty in accurately theorising the relationship between the individual and the power of discourse has stemmed from the individual and society having often been conceptually dichotomised in the literature in the first place (Burkitt 1991). Butler’s (1990) work on the performativity of gender offers a useful perspective on constructing selves that may help to bridge the gap between the power of discourse and embodied selves (Bell 2008). In the context of selves, Bell (2008, p.174) observed that “performativity has come to mean that we perform multiple and shifting identities in history, language, and material embodiments.” Butler noted that the constitution of selves is an embodied performance that is processual, wherein individuals are always ‘on the stage’ and “within the terms of the performance” (1990, p.277), yet “just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation” so can individuals “expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds” (p.282).

Thus, while all performances are citations, or enacted ways of doing, for instance, class, gender, ethnicity, age and abilities, selves are also performative in that they are negotiated in and through a process of becoming (Bell 2008). The theatrical metaphor of ‘kinesis’ offers insight into the performative nature of constituting selves as a process of “breaking and remaking” in which performances not only mirror and sustain normative boundaries but can also subvert and transgress them (Bell 2008, p.13). Thus, selves are not fixed givens, but are always in process.

Returning to the broader literature on self reviewed for this thesis, however, it is clear that the notion of a unique inner self is a historical construction and that individuals are socially based, thus lending emphasis to self as relational and fluid. McAdams (1997, p.47) made a similar observation in having noted:

Perspectives from social psychology, personality and developmental psychology, sociology, contemporary psychoanalysis, and postmodern social theory tend to agree that the self is more multiple than unitary, and more so today than ever before.
Nevertheless, while individuals may have fluid, situational selves from an ‘objective’ perspective, where selves are constructed in reference to identity points that include day-to-day interactions, social and cultural roles and circumstances such as nationality, class, race, ethnicity and gender, a distinction can still be drawn between subjective and objective aspects of selfhood (Cote & Levine 2002, McAdams 1997). Through the embodied notion of ‘I’, individuals attempt to synthesise subjective experience into a reflective conception of self (McAdams 1997). While individuals may outwardly display a relational self by offering different narratives across different situations, “it would be foolish to propose that a consciousness of relational selves is widely shared in Western culture” (Gergen 1991, p.157). In fact, quite to the contrary, as mentioned above, many modern individuals have internalised the rhetoric of self-development, which has materialised as a problematic modern quest for a unified sense of self (Baumeister 1986).

2.7 A tension between late modernity and the search for self

Searching for self is pervasive in modern society as a meta-narrative of self as an inner moral source with a potential that should be cultivated still pervades much of Western society (Baumeister 1986, McAdams 1997). Consequently, most modern Western individuals seek an idea of self that reflects unity and purpose, a cultural expectation that one’s self reflects “a patterned and purposeful integration of the me” (McAdams 1997, p.60). However, seeking a coherent sense of self has been increasingly problematic in Western society for two primary reasons. First, the idea of an inner self has taken on increasing importance in Western society as it has been ‘reified’, meaning that an abstract idea has come to be regarded as concrete (Baumeister 1986). Concurrently, as Western scepticism of external moral authority has increased, especially as religious faith has declined, the consensus about moral values has suffered (Baumeister 1986, McAdams 1997). In exchange, individuals have turned to the abstract idea of one’s inner self as a source of moral direction in decision making, lending social capital to the notion that one should listen to one’s ‘true self’ (McAdams 1997).

However, the modern process of relying on one’s inner self for guidance is not only problematic because of the illusory nature of the inner self. Maintaining a coherent sense of self has also become a more difficult process in modern and late modern Western society as social organisation has changed so that choice has increasingly replaced obligation or tradition as a basis in self-definition (Cote & Levine 2002). Thus, for many modern individuals, constructing and maintaining a stable sense of self has become an ongoing issue.
Prior to the modern age, the primary determinants of identity were fixed by birth and included lineage, gender, home and social class (Baumeister 1986). At this earlier stage in Western human history, when identity was largely rooted in a community of others and not up to individual choice or negotiation, problems of self-conception were reportedly less of an issue (Cote & Levine 2002).

On the other hand, the late modern age in particular has been marked by an ‘openness’ of social life in which individuals have a higher level of choice over matters of personal meaning (Cote & Levine 2002, Giddens 1991), with this latitude for self-definition also coinciding with new ‘socialising technologies’, such as the Internet, television, air travel, radio and telephone that have radically changed human relationships (Cote & Levine 2002, Gergen 1991). Local face-to-face interactions have become rarer, while globalisation, which has been marked by these new technologies, has increasingly exposed individuals to a new range of persons, forms of relationships, options and opportunities for constructing and exploring selves (Gergen 1991). As some aspects of identity have become more a matter of choice rather than social ascription, Western individuals have become forced to negotiate relational selves among an increasing diversity of options that can be transitory, fragmented and unstable (Cote & Levine 2002, Giddens 1991). Resultantly, the pluralisation of options in late modernity can lead to incoherent and disconnected relationships that may contribute to a fragmented sense of self (Gergen 1991, Giddens 1991).

It has further been suggested that the impact of new socialising technologies has been that many late modern individuals are reaching a state described by Gergen (1991) as ‘social saturation’, which has produced a considerable change in our ways of understanding ourselves. In tension with a modern or humanist view of inner self as unified and actualisable, social saturation suggests a cacophony of relational selves as “for everything we ‘know to be true’ about ourselves, other voices respond with doubt and even derision” (Gergen 1991, p.6). A saturation of self has been equated with the condition of postmodernity, where previous beliefs about the self as centred fail to hold and “each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality” (Gergen 1991, p.7). For as Bauman (1996, p.18) has said about identity in modernity and postmodernity: “Indeed, if the modern ‘problem of identity’ was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern ‘problem of identity’ is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open.” In this sense, a postmodern, or fully relational self, slides from image to image and can be presented on the “whim of the moment” and eschews substance (Cote & Levine 2002, p.26). Kuentzel (2000, p.88) noted
that “the idea of a ‘core’ self that directs life decisions, and develops and matures through life’s experiences carries little currency in postmodern theory.”

While selves in contemporary times are increasingly fragmented and fractured (Hall 1996), there is still substantial debate in sociology as to whether Western society can be described by an ‘amalgamation’ of characteristics said to form the condition of postmodernity or whether it is still in the throes of late modernity (Sharpley 2003). Of course, it is more likely that Western society is somewhere between the two, as while aspects of the world might be described as postmodern, it would be inaccurate to assume that all individuals perceive the world through a postmodern lens (Gergen 1991). As Cohen (1995, p.24) commented, the term postmodernity implies that it “is a transitional phenomenon, rather than a novel, well-integrated and permanent cultural system.” Indeed, instead of living a life fully “dictated by communal consciousness” wherein one ceases to believe in the self as an autonomous agent, (Cote & Levine 2002, p. 28, Gergen 1991), many individuals still seek to form “a patterned collection of social practices that constitute a sense of continuity and stability”; in this context, the self becomes an ‘anchoring’ or sense-making device (Kuentzel 2000, p. 87). In other words, many individuals may still search for a coherent sense of self.

A popular sociological view is that a secure or coherent sense of self might be obtained by constructing a narrative of the self based on “negotiating passages through life and reflecting on these actions” (Breathnach 2006, Cote and Levine 2002, p.49). Within what has been termed ‘structuration theory’, Giddens (1991, p.5) offered that the embodied self in late modernity has become a reflexive project that “consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives.” For Giddens (1991), one’s sense of self, or cognitive component of personhood, is interpreted and understood reflexively in terms of one’s biography or capacity to maintain a particular narrative or ‘story’ about the self. As is discussed in Section 3.5, the notion of lifestyle choice has taken on particular importance in late modernity as lifestyle can help give form to a particular narrative of self-identity (Giddens 1991).

In terms of constructing and maintaining a sense of self through narrative, Giddens (1991, p.186) pointed out that this process is inherently fragile as “a self-identity has to be created and more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions.” Giddens (1991, p.53) noted that while some individuals may experience a coherent or ordered sense of self, others “may lack a consistent feeling of biographical continuity.” Sociologists tend to refer to the negotiation of this process as ‘identity maintenance’ (Cote & Levine 2002), the trials of which are discussed in further detail in the next section.
2.8 Trying to maintain a coherent sense of self

Rather than being able to construct and maintain a coherent sense of self, selves in late modernity are increasingly fragmented and fractured as they are “multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (Hall 1996, p.4). As Gergen (1991, p.73 noted: “For as new and disparate voices are added to one’s being, committed identity becomes an increasingly arduous achievement”. Furthermore, McAdams (1997, p.61) highlighted that “many social observers suggest that the problem of unity and purpose in the me is as great today as it has ever been.” Gergen (1991, p.73) has observed that social saturation in Western society has led to a widespread condition of ‘multiphrenia’, which refers to “the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments.”

Upon initial inspection, multiphrenia bears resemblance to Erikson’s (1968) description of ‘identity crisis’, wherein an individual may experience a subjective sense of identity confusion that is characterised by behavioural disarray (Cote & Levine 2002). According to Erikson (1968), an identity crisis ‘normally’ takes place in Western societies when an adolescent’s childhood identity is no longer experienced as suitable, but a new adult identity has not yet been established. Hence, Erikson (1968) conceptualised an identity crisis, which was described as a state of ‘psychological limbo’ or identity confusion, as a developmental process typical in transitions from childhood to adulthood (Cote & Levine 2002). Moreover, Erikson (1968) suggested that cultures often provide guidance in moving from childhood to adulthood in the form of an institutionalised moratorium from adult responsibilities wherein young adults are allotted the freedom to experiment with different temporary roles. It has been suggested that this experimentation takes various forms, such as travel, military and voluntary service or just ‘dropping out’ for a while (Cote & Levine 2002). Berger (1973) suggested that Western society had reached a point of pervasive identity crisis, and referred to the 1970s counterculture as the foremost example of this.

The notion of identity crisis, however, is distinct from multiphrenia in two important ways. For one, identity crisis uses a developmental perspective which assumes that an individual forms and develops a secure sense of self during late adolescence. Within sociology, it is more common to consider identity maintenance issues across the entire life course, rather than just identity formation during one particular stage (Cote & Levine 2002). As such, Gergen (1991) did not link multiphrenia to a particular period of life. Second, identity crisis is commonly used by mental health professionals to express a ‘human deficit’
in making sense of the self. In contrast, multiphrenia does not assume multiple self-investments to be a form of illness. While multiphrenia has been used to explain the stressful situations of individuals who unsuccessfully seek a unified sense of self, in contrast to identity crisis or confusion, a ‘multiphrenic condition’ can also be “suffused with a sense of expansiveness and adventure” (Gergen 1991, p.74). This latter aspect of multiphrenia again feeds the postmodern hope of liberation through a relational self (Seigel 2005).

Multiphrenia can be linked to the conditions of globalisation, within which the notion of ‘deterritorialisation’, as a blurring of the boundary between ‘home’ and ‘away’, has been said to be the product of people increasingly dividing their attention, and even presence, between multiple places (D’Andrea 2007a, Hannerz 2002). While the experience of multiphrenia can be disconcerting for some, the embracement of a multiphrenic condition can also be linked to ‘cosmopolitanism’, which as a perspective or mode of managing meaning, has been described as maintaining a coherent sense of self through selective appropriation from the world’s different cultural forms (Hannerz 1990, 2002). Mass media, Internet use and transnational friendship networks, in combination with travel, have also been cited as contributing factors to deterritorialisation, with a perspective of cosmopolitanism suggested as a possible outcome (Hannerz 2002, Phillips & Smith 2008). Giddens (1991, p190) summarised the notion of the cosmopolitan as a cultural figure:

A person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. Thus a cosmopolitan person is one precisely who draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts.

Cosmopolitanism has been criticised at times for being narcissistic (Hannerz 1990), yet this is not surprising as an over-emphasis on the self has been aligned in the literature with both narcissism and selfishness (Clecak 1983).

In addition to the perspective of cosmopolitanism, another attempt at making sense of the self was offered in Foucault’s (1984) work, *The Care of the Self*. In stark contrast to Foucault’s previous works, where individuality was conceptualised as the product of a dominating social discourse (Seigel 2005), ‘care of the self’ emphasised “creating one’s life by treating it as an object to be given style and beauty” (Cohen & Taylor 1992, p.24). Foucault (1984, p.43) held that “the idea that one ought to attend to oneself, care for oneself, was actually a very ancient theme in Greek culture,” and that the Greek injunction ‘Know yourself’ had been overemphasised by Western philosophy while the former had been forgotten. Thus, to ‘take care of yourself” allowed for different forms of care for different
forms of self and did not posit that there was a true self to discover (Cohen & Taylor 1992, Foucault 1984). However, Foucault’s (1984) care of the self seems markedly similar to the discourse on existential authenticity, which is discussed in Section 2.14.1. Moreover, Foucault has been criticised for having swung between extreme views of the self, having first viewed the self as an illusion constructed out of linguistics, while later attributing the self a much larger reflective capacity (Seigel 2005).

While self is still a contested concept, it is clear that the myth of a true self has been largely dispelled in academic circles. Nonetheless, although selves in late modernity may be widely accepted in the academic literature as relational and fluid, a tension seems to still exist for modern individuals who seek to develop a coherent sense of self among an increasing array of life options. For individuals still on the modern quest for self-development, who may try to actively construct a coherent sense of self through narratives “rooted in the human propensity to remember and project” (Seigel 2005, p.653), maintaining a coherent sense of self in the context of social saturation is inherently problematic. As this thesis examines the role of the search for self specifically in the context of lifestyle travellers, the focus of this chapter is now turned to the scholarship that has used self in helping to explain leisure travel motivations.

2.9 Self within tourism studies

Issues of self are not new to tourism studies as the “exploration and evaluation of self” was long ago suggested as a traditional tourist motive (Crompton 1979, p. 416). Crompton (1979, p.411) further noted that while “personal enrichment may not be the exclusive prerogative” for going on holiday, “a pleasure vacation may be viewed by some people as an opportunity for re-evaluating and discovering more about themselves” (p.416). Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) pointed out that the theme of travelling to ‘find one’s self’ has a lengthy literary tradition as exhibited in the early works of Ovid, Chaucer, Spenser and Tennyson and in later popular works by Hemingway, Conrad, Lawrence and Kerouac.

Desforges (2000) observed that tourism studies have addressed the general theme of ‘personhood’ as a tool in understanding tourism consumption, using terms such as ‘identity’, ‘subjectivity’, and ‘self’, with these words at times employed interchangeably. Whilst Wearing and Wearing (2001) traced sociological perspectives on self in the context of tourism, Desforges (2000) held that most tourism studies that have addressed themes of personhood have approached their studies with ‘identity’ as their orienting concept. While the use of identity in some tourism scholarship may have assumed an understanding of selves
as fluid and relational, there has also been a considerable quantity of tourism scholarship that has viewed the self as an actualisable object. For instance, Cohen (1996) noted the importance of self-actualisation as an intrinsic motive for travel and Neumann (1992, p.182) alleged that “journeys provide the opportunity to acquire experiences that become the basis for discovering and transforming one’s self.” Moreover, Neumann (1992, p.177) held that tourist sites “are places where people find themselves working towards forms of self-realization and meaning, attempting to fill experiential vacancies that run through contemporary life.”

Perhaps the literature in these cases has reflected the ambitions of certain tourists. As Rojek (1993, p. 178) stated, “the traveller views travel experience as a resource in the quest for self-realization.” Welk (2004) noted that while the hippie movement was largely driven by the urge to revolutionise society, backpackers today, if interested in change at all, are more likely to be interested in changing themselves. Moreover, O’Reilly (2006, p.999) has observed that there is a belief among travellers that “travel can lead to self-development and self-knowledge.”

Most of the literature within tourism studies that looks at self has focused within the contexts of leisure travel and backpacking. As travel has been associated with the accumulation of experiences that can be used to narrate selves (Desforges 2000), “backpacking today is often presented in terms of the need to ‘find myself’ or the development of a stronger sense of self” (O’Reilly 2006, p.1004). Noy (2004) has also noted that the discourse of backpackers is intensely organised around the narration of selves, whereas such narrations amongst tourists in general might be more easily overlooked. But, it is more specifically travel, rather than tourism in general, that is associated with Romantic and pilgrimage discourses wherein a theme of self-transformation is prominent (Noy 2004). This association between travel and self-transformation, which highlights tourist angst as a factor in constructing a traveller identity (as discussed further in Section 3.2.1), has been summarised by C.C. O’Reilly (2005, p.167):

The extent to which long-term independent travel is bound up with people’s sense of self and identity is indicated by the intensity of feeling generated by the labels ‘tourist’, ‘traveller’ and ‘backpacker’. Being a tourist is common – it is not transformative, and lacks the qualities valued by backpackers. Journeying through space and time is a key element of the transformative experience.

Richards and Wilson (2004c, p.64) pointed out that tourist angst suggests that “the backpacker subculture is based on one of the major problems of society – the uncertainty of
identity” as “it is perhaps easier to reject the act of being a tourist, having a stable job, or staying in a luxury hotel, than to find out who you are.”

The importance of self to ‘adventure travellers’ and “independent travellers on the global ‘shoestring’ trails” has been highlighted by Davidson (2005, p.31), who noted that the body of contemporary scholarship on these groups is united by a desire to understand how travellers “incorporate their travelling experiences into their own conception of self-identity.” Indeed, Richards and Wilson (2004c, p.48) have noted that “the emerging literature emphasises the increasing importance of identity and the perpetuation of self-narratives in backpacker travel.” Noy’s (2004, p.79) work with backpackers’ narrations of their travel experiences indicated that “selves and identities, rather than the exciting activities and accomplishments which constitute the overt topic of narration” are what “lies at the core of the backpackers’ stories.”

In attempting to answer questions of self, travellers have been reported to narrate self through the addition of perceived self-changes such as gaining a “fulfilled self, an educated self, a youthful or even a mature self” (Desforges 2000, p.937). The stories told by Noy’s (2004) respondents were often of personal changes as a result of the trip, depicted in terms of maturation and development. In general, Noy and Cohen (2005, p.70) indicated that “backpackers repeatedly characterise the trips as ‘a deep meaningful’ experience or ‘a growing period,’ and often see it as an opportunity to crystallize future plans.” Self-change through travel was also reported by the travellers that Westerhausen (2002) interviewed, who nearly all noted that they had undergone significant changes while being on the road. This perception was reflected by the respondents having experienced a high degree of reverse culture shock upon their return home (Westerhausen 2002). In identifying differences between first-time and more experienced backpackers, Anderskov (2002) concluded that seeking self-realisation was one of several reasons why first-time backpackers decided to travel, whereas for more experienced backpackers, personal development and self-actualisation acted as a primary motivator.

Thus, the act of travel supposedly foments a narration of self that allows travellers to think of themselves as certain sorts of persons (Desforges 2000). This narrative is internal, in that it might help the individual to “sustain an interior narrative of personhood,” but also external, in that the narrative is a performance (Desforges 2000, p.930), which (re)produces a meta-narrative of finding a unified sense of self through travel. As mentioned before, however, the modern notion of discovering the self through travel is not just about seeking; it is also dependent on the notion of avoidance or escape (Iso-Ahola 1982). As Neumann (1992, p.196) suggested:
Journeys towards something are often journeys away from something as well. As people search for something new, they often become occupied by the problem of escaping the old. Both forces propel people in a paradoxical longing for new experience and self-identity.

Hence, this chapter now turns to what individuals may be attempting to escape from, as potentially part of a broader process of searching for self.

2.10 Escapism

Within the modern literature on tourist motivation, the need to escape has long been posited as a motive for why some individuals go on holiday (Crompton 1979, Dann 1977). Cohen and Taylor (1992) highlighted that ‘escape attempts’ are so well documented in literary manifestos and guidebooks that they have almost taken on an allegorical quality of pilgrimage or a search for meaning, such as in Hesse’s portrayal of a quest for enlightenment through The Journey to the East. Cohen and Taylor (1992, p.218) have suggested that escape attempts are underpinned by a search for one’s true self: “What are the advertisements in the window of the escape-attempts supermarket? Largest of all is the invitation to step inside and find your true self.” They (1992, p.215) related:

The emergence over the last century, for example, of the idea of the romantic outsider – somebody who can be a member of society but simultaneously take a stance against that society – has lent credibility to ideas of rebellion, escape, liberation.

Escapism within tourism studies has been described as a push factor, which refers to factors that predispose an individual to travel (Dann 1977). Crompton (1979) pointed out that, traditionally, push factors have been used to try to explain the desire or need to go on a holiday whereas pull factors have been used to explain destination choice. In terms of escapism as a push factor, Dann (1977, p.187) suggested that a tourist may wish to “get away from it all,” or in other words, escape a feeling of isolation that may be felt in everyday life. A feeling of isolation was attributed to an individual perceiving one’s ‘home’ society as anomic (Dann 1977).

Anomie is a sociological term used to describe situations where social ‘norms’ are conflicting or unintegrated (Roberts 1978). When applied to an individual, a derivative of anomie, anomia, can be used to describe someone who feels unable to direct her/his life meaningfully in a social context (Dann 1977, Roberts 1978). Anomie can be linked to
Gergen’s (1991) conceptualisation of multiphrenia when it is experienced as a stressful condition. Anomie also forms the basis for MacCannell’s (1976) conceptualisation of an alienated individual seeking authenticity, which is discussed in Section 2.14.

Dann (1977) proposed that one of the main reasons for individuals to travel is to escape an anomic society. Crompton (1979, p.416) added to Dann’s work based on findings that suggested that the desire to “escape from a perceived mundane environment,” or in other words, routine, formed one of the major motives driving vacation behaviour. However, neither Dann (1977) nor Crompton (1979) endeavoured to suggest what might constitute an anomic or mundane environment. Crompton (1979) only noted that a holiday environment must be socially and physically different from the environment in which one normally lives in order to facilitate a feeling of escape. The pull of a novel physical and social context was also held by Crompton (1979) to be an ‘essential ingredient’ in self-discovery. More specifically, a number of other researchers have indicated aspects of modern Western society from which travellers may try to escape.

Iso-Ahola (1982) broadly suggested that individuals may try to escape dimensions of their personal world and interpersonal world. In terms of one’s personal world, this may encompass problems, failures and personal troubles. The interpersonal world was said to include friends, family members, relatives and co-workers (Iso-Ahola 1982). In Riley’s (1988, p.317) description of long-term budget travellers, she held that her respondents were “escaping from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routine, from their jobs, from making decisions about careers, and desire to delay or postpone work, marriage, and other responsibilities.”

Other researchers that have looked at travel as a form of escape have identified wider aspects of Western society, which links back to the idea of anomie that may push individuals to travel. Atlejevic and Doorne (2000, p.135) conducted focus groups with long-term travellers and found they had “pessimistic perceptions of global capitalism and its associated lifestyle” and an “increasing dissatisfaction with the Western way of life” (p.133) that caused the travellers to see travel as a form of escape which allowed for ‘personal growth’. Moreover, Macbeth’s (2000) study of ocean cruisers characterised the ocean cruising lifestyle as an ‘escape attempt’ that can become a way of life. According to Macbeth (2000), an ocean cruising lifestyle can embody a social critique of ‘mainstream’ society as restrictive, controlling and materialistic. Also, Westerhausen (2002) found that travelling in ‘developing’ countries can lead to a more critical attitude of life in Western society.

A critical attitude towards Western society was reinforced in Maoz’s (2007, p.126) study of Israeli backpacker motivations, in which the subjects “attempt to escape what they
describe as a very materialistic, stressed and harsh society” and as such perceived a reversal of their previous ‘conformist’ life. In contrast to perceived conformity, the escape offered by travel enabled the respondents to judge themselves as constructing their own individual selves (Maoz 2007). Davidson (2005, p.36) found that “many travellers imagine and experience travel as a route to ‘finding one’s own space’ outside the social, political and economic contradictions of life at home.” Furthermore, Elsrud’s (2001, p.604) interviewees reported that a timespace away from home relieved them from a pressure on self and that instead, a “‘free’ and ‘self-controlled’ timespace…supplies a requisite for creating a new or ‘truer’ identity.” Thus, as put by Richards and Wilson (2004a, p.5) in their discussion of the nomad as an idealised form of travel, travel can be perceived as a “liberation from the constraints of modern society.” As seen in these last few quotes, escape is coupled with the idea of freedom, the topic of Section 2.11.

In contrast to researchers that have largely focused on escape from one’s interpersonal world, including wider complaints about society in general, Baumeister (1991) commented from a psychology perspective that individuals may be trying to escape their current ideas of ‘self’. Baumeister (1991) used examples of alcoholism, masochism and suicide, amongst others, to justify his thesis and suggested that escape may be temporarily achieved by ‘shrinking’ down the self to its bare minimum. Baumeister (1991, p.12) suggested that “to escape from the self is to free oneself of the struggle to maintain a certain image.” Hence, Baumeister (1991) essentially described a subjective escape from the struggle to maintain a certain image of self, which can be related back to the idea of travel as an escape attempt from personal and interpersonal problems.

While it has been demonstrated that the need to escape has been frequently suggested as a motivator for travelling, it must also be pointed out that motivations are multidimensional, need to be contextualised and are changing over time (Crompton 1979, Goeldner & Ritchie 2006, Ryan 1997a, Ryan 1997b). As such, holidays may be periods of escape for some individuals at certain times (Ryan 1997a), and for those for which escape is relevant, it may also be working in tandem with other needs and desires. Thus, while all of the researchers reviewed in this section worked with the idea of escape as a potential motive, many of them also considered a range of other reasons that can influence changing tourist behaviours. For instance, Dann (1997) coupled escape with the need for ego-enhancement and Crompton (1979) identified escape as one motive among seven (also including exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction). As an example of the need for escape changing over time, Macbeth’s (2000) ocean cruisers tended to experience the push to escape more strongly in
their early months of cruising, whereas in later years the focus shifted to a pull factor of creating and sustaining an ‘alternative’ lifestyle.

2.10.1 Escaping a ‘paramount reality’

Within modern literature on escape, there has existed an underlying assumption that a dominant reality exists that individuals may attempt to resist (Cohen & Taylor 1992). This ‘paramount reality’ would have “objectively specifiable circumstances” such as, for instance, a daily timetable, an occupational career or domestic routines (Cohen & Taylor 1992, p.3). Most people would view a quest to escape as a ‘projection’ out from these dominant values of their society (Rojek 1993). However, Cohen and Taylor (1992, p.15) pointed out that in recent years poststructural literature has done much to deconstruct the notion of a paramount reality as “what ‘the collapse of meta-narratives’ implies is that there is no single meaning system or metaphor that we can use to obtain a sense of the world from which we want to distance ourselves or against which we want to construct an alternative.” In other words, rather than there being an underlying paramount reality, what seems real is that which is most successfully presented as real, however, such a reality is actually just one experiential mode among many (Cohen & Taylor 1992). Hence, poststructural thought argues that it is not justifiable to talk about escape when there is no all-encompassing reality from which to escape. As Rojek (1993, p.212) held: “There is no escape.”

Even though the theoretical impossibility of actual escape has been highlighted through poststructural discourse, there are still reasons to consider escape as a useful metaphor. Some researchers have considered the poststructural rejection of escape and yet, have still found it important and relevant to explore the experiences of individuals who may seek to escape (see Cohen & Taylor 1992, Macbeth 2000). As Cohen and Taylor (1992, p. 234) concluded: “None of our scepticism or pessimism should hide our continual amazement and delight at how people keep up this struggle, how they keep trying to dislodge the self from society.” In this light, the focus of the chapter is now turned from what individuals may be trying to escape from, and returns to a consideration of what they may be hoping to escape to through travel.

2.11 Freedom in leisure

In returning to the idea of seeking-behaviour in travel, it is first helpful to consider the work that has been done on freedom in leisure studies. As mentioned earlier, the Romanticist
notion of freedom has been touted as a precursor in discovering one’s true self (Beedie 2007, Jamieson 1996) and discourse on ‘perceived freedom’ has paralleled discussions of escape within tourism and leisure studies. Also, escape has been situated within leisure as part of a two-fold process involving both avoidance and seeking (Iso-Ahola 1982, p.258).

Satisfaction that individuals expect to derive from involvement in a leisure activity is linked to two motivational forces: approach (seeking) and avoidance (escape). In other words, individuals perceive a leisure activity as a potential satisfaction-producer for two major reasons: it provides certain intrinsic rewards, such as feelings of mastery and competence, and helps them leave the routine environment behind themselves.

Thus, satisfaction through leisure is theoretically derived from a feeling of escape coupled with perceived intrinsic rewards. Neumann (1992, p.177) noted the process of seeking compensatory rewards through leisure:

Leisure experience compensates for everyday life in ways that inherently recall and provide a critical stance toward the routine worlds that people attempt to escape. People seek out in leisure what is sometimes lost or obscured in the worlds of work, family, and private life.

As reviewed below, the potential of leisure to provide feelings of freedom is linked to the idea of perceived intrinsic motivation, a pairing which has traditionally served as central pillars in leisure theory (Mannell, Zuzanek & Larson 1988).

The word ‘leisure’ comes from the old French ‘leisir’, which was in turn derived from the Latin ‘licere’, meaning ‘to be permitted’ (Turner 1977). The role of freedom as permitted by leisure can be traced back 2,300 years ago to its roots in Greek civilisation, during which Aristotle claimed that “leisure is a state of being in which activity is performed for its own sake or as its own end” (de Grazia 1962, p.15). Aristotle’s philosophy, which positioned leisure as a goal in life, provided the original theoretical groundwork for leisure studies (Pieper 1952, Veal & Lynch 2001). The philosophy came to be known as the ‘classical leisure ideal’ and was largely based on the notion that ‘true’ leisure is intrinsically motivated, or done for its own sake, independent of external influences (de Grazia 1962, Neulinger 1981).

The classical leisure ideal was eventually overwhelmed by the rise of the Roman Empire, the industrial revolution and Calvin’s Protestant work ethic (Goodale & Godbey 1988, Veal & Lynch 2001). Veal and Lynch (2001) have suggested that the industrial revolution entrenched a firmer work/leisure divide, as a result of which the need to escape
work and consequently ‘re-create’ through recreation increased. Despite the weakening of the classical leisure ideal within Western society, its ideas of freedom and intrinsic motivation have carried on from ancient Greece into modern leisure discourse (Veal & Lynch 2001).

Intrinsic motivation is theoretically in contrast to extrinsic motivation, which involves engagement in an activity for an external reward (Neulinger 1981). However, the border between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is blurred, as Kelly (1996, p.414) suggested, “leisure is not just personal experience or social control or creative action or anything else. It is not either/or: either individual or social, either free or controlled.” Befittingly, the concept of intrinsic motivation has been heavily contested within leisure discourse as, like in Foucauldian discussions of the self as discursively formed, it is argued that it is not possible for an individual to act independently of societal pressures (Godbey 2003). Godbey (2003, p.3) stated: “in a complex society such as ours, no time is free of the constraints of norms of behaviour. We still have certain rules to follow.” From this perspective, even the idea of intrinsic motivation itself can be taken as socially constructed. So, in linking intrinsic motivation back to the idea of being free to do as one wants, the idea of absolute freedom is negated.

Regardless of a social constructionist lens, subjectively, an individual perceives an activity as being performed with a degree of choice (Neulinger 1981), and as such, may judge an activity as being intrinsically motivated or not. Freedom may be an illusion, yet even “illusions do have consequences” (Lefcourt 1973, p.417). Clearly, what takes place within the mind of an individual will be critical to how the individual perceives an experience. As Irvine (2006, p.110) commented on the importance of feeling that we are free:

We don’t want our choice making to be an illusion…such choices, we fear, would not be meaningful. We are willing to go to great lengths to preserve, if not actual freedom, at least the feeling that we are free.

The importance of perceived freedom to leisure was plainly summarised by Neulinger (1981, p.16): “Leisure, then, has one and only one essential criterion, and that is the condition of perceived freedom. By this we mean a state in which the person feels that what he/she is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it.” Consequently, perceived freedom has been suggested as the critical determinant of perceptions of leisure (Iso-Ahola 1980). Returning to Iso-Ahola’s (1982) contention that leisure is both avoidance and seeking, it is clear that a perceived escape ‘from’ and freedom ‘to’ is central to leisure in general, and also, as justified below, to travel.
2.12 Travel's promise of freedom

Academic discourses on freedom within leisure and tourism have developed fairly independently of each other (Mannell & Iso-Ahola 1987). Tourism has been claimed to be “the epitome of freedom and personal choice characteristic of Western individualism” (Graburn 1983, p.13). Thus, while escape was considered above as a push factor, a hope of finding freedom through travel has also been considered as a pull factor. As Riley (1988, p.317) commented about her study of long-term budget travellers, which carried the same theoretical point as the above discussion on leisure: “Their motivations for traveling may be, in Paul Theroux’s (1975) words, ‘equal parts escape and pursuit’ – that is, the result of both push and pull factors,” with pull factors including “an opportunity to experience real freedom” (1988, p.318).

In reference to what types of freedom it has been suggested can be found on the road, White and White (2004, p.212) emphasised that it is not only freedom from “pressures and constraints,” but also “freedom to stay or move on… freedom to preserve one’s anonymity, maintain distance, or to engage socially.” Hence, it appears that a promise of freedom through travel can be coupled with the use of travel as a means of attempted escape. Wearing and Wearing (2001, p.150) described how escape and freedom have been linked in the literature with the search for self.

Tourism serves to provide a free area, a mental and physical escape from the immediacy of the multiplicity of impinging pressures in technological society and, as such, holiday experiences provide a scope for the nurturance and cultivation of human identity.

Within tourism studies, there is much evidence to suggest that the ideal of freedom is particularly important to the experiences of backpackers (Ateljevic & Doorne 2005, Elsrud 2001, Jamieson 1996, Shulman, Blatt & Walsh 2006). Cohen (2004, p.55) noted that “backpacking is also a ‘time frame’ free of obligations, within which backpackers can ‘create’ their own time and which thus helps to further the process of personal growth and development.” As Ateljevic and Doorne (2004, p.60) suggested: “The term ‘backpacker’ has over the last decade become synonymous with a travelstyle that emphasises freedom and mobility.” Moreover, it has been posited that one of backpacking’s primary attractions is the promise of a sense of freedom (Richards and Wilson 2004a), as freedom has been suggested to be “the most cherished value in the backpacker culture” (Anderskov 2002, n.p.). Cohen (2004, p.54) further noted that “the uses that backpackers make of their freedom, and their
experimentation with new experiences are formative factors in the constitution or re-constitution of the backpackers’ sense of identity.”

The allure of the backpacker realm as a ‘free area’ outside of ‘mainstream’ society is not only found in academic literature, but also in popular discourse on travel. An example can be found in Taylor’s (1994, p.51) novel *The Freedom Junkies*, wherein the author used a notion of freedom in helping to describe the travellers who were his central characters: “They mistrusted society, and purposely placed themselves beyond the reach of the Establishment… They were free spirits and it was the sense of freedom that unified them, however tenuously, as a group.” The idea of being ‘beyond the reach’ of society through travel demonstrates how travel has been represented as existing in a space outside the structure of ‘real’ life. To support this questionable notion within tourism scholarship, some researchers have turned to Turner’s (1977) sociological work on ‘liminality’ (for instance Lett 1983).

2.12.1 *The liminoid through tourism*

Turner (1977) used liminality to refer to a state of transition in religious rites-of-passage through ritual or pilgrimage (Sharpley 2003). The rites-of-passage were traditionally marked by three phases, which include separation, margin (limen) and re-aggregation (Turner 1977). ‘Limen’ is a metaphorical threshold that one may pass through that is described as departure from the structure of one’s everyday life in society and entry into a transitory state of liminality (Turner 1977). Liminality is characterised by ‘antistructure’, which is described as freedom from everyday social and economic constraints (Sharpley 2003).

In cases where there is not necessarily a religious or ritual association present, such as in travel, but which still may have liminal qualities, Turner used the term ‘liminoid’ (Lett 1983). Sharpley (2003, p.5-21) has reviewed how, while on holiday, tourists may experience a liminoid period where they “are temporarily freed from the demands of their jobs, household chores, social commitments and, generally, the behavioural norms and values of their society.” Kim and Jamal (2007, p.184) suggested that within “liminal touristic space, conventional social norms and regulations are often temporarily suspended as tourists take advantage of the relative anonymity and freedom from community scrutiny.” Sharpley (2003, p.5-21) suggested that this separation allows tourists to “enjoy the sense of freedom and escape offered by the holiday.”

Both liminal and liminoid periods are described as transitory, in which the involved individual usually has definite intentions of returning to the structured world of ‘everyday life’ (Lett 1983). In Noy and Cohen’s (2005, p.6) study of Israeli backpackers, they noted
that the Israeli youths go through a liminoid period “in which they undergo personal change” and “form or consolidate their identity.” Noy and Cohen’s (2005) description is in keeping with Erikson’s (1968) account of an institutionalised moratorium within which young adults ‘develop’ an adult identity. In describing a moratorium among both younger and older travellers, White and White (2004, p.216) alleged that a liminoid journey allowed for the process of a “disintegration and reintegration of personal identity.”

Turner (1997, p.37) did note that in some cases, however, movement through the liminal and liminoid “may cease to be a mere transition and become a set way of life.” Although, Lett (1983) maintained that few individuals would find a permanent state of antistructure to be an attractive proposition. Jamieson (1996), who interviewed travellers on their ‘overseas experience’ away from New Zealand, speculated that sustained freedom in a liminoid state might eventually make it difficult for an individual to return home and re-integrate.

However, as in leisure studies discussions, the idea that the travel environment offers an absolute freedom wherein prior conceptions of self can disintegrate is a myth. Rather than being a space of antistructure wherein a traveller can experience ‘true’ freedom, travel environments, just like all social environments, are still economically, socially and culturally constructed places. In Sørensen’s (2003) ethnography of backpacker culture, he noted how backpacker behaviour cannot be fully explained by liminality. Backpacker behaviour is also “circumscribed by the norms and values of the backpacker travel culture” (Sørensen 2003, p.854). This is also evidenced by Sussman’s (2002) observations on reverse culture shock wherein repatriating sojourners often have changed cultural perspectives and may experience cultural distress upon returning home. Thus, some returning travellers feel that they no longer fit into their home country (Sussman 2002, Wilson 2006). Performing within an established set of cultural norms and values is a constraint upon freedom (Beedie 2007). So, while travellers may find some space from the cultural constraints of their home environments through travel, complete freedom is again an illusion as there are still rules to follow.

Nonetheless, it appears that a perceived sense of freedom is important to the meanings travellers attach to their travel experiences (Jamieson 1996). Within both tourism and leisure, it is important that “individuals believe that they are free or that they are controlling events rather than being controlled by events” (Godbey 2003, p.5). Perceptions of freedom may not only allow individuals to feel as if they have escaped, but may also give those individuals the feeling that they can ‘freely’ pursue their desires. Jamieson (1996) reported that a traveller’s perception of freedom on the road can be a central feature or ‘precursor’, through which the occurrence of other experiences is catalysed. In addition to the idea that individuals seek
escape in order to find freedom, including a freedom to search for self, leisure travel narratives often place freedom within the context of seeking challenge in order to find insights. Thus, the notion of seeking self-insight or knowledge through challenges and adventure is discussed in the next section.

2.13 Self-insight through challenge

There is substantial literature within leisure, recreation and tourism that has posited that self-insight or knowledge can be gained through the negotiation of challenging situations (Walle 1997, Weber 2001). Challenging and risky situations have been represented as fomentive of experiential states through which individuals may gain mastery and competence, temporarily escape self-consciousness and then re-emerge with a ‘stronger’ sense of self (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). Extended travel, “constructed as strenuous and at times risky,” has been said to include the deliberate seeking of risk and adventure so as to generate personal changes that are perceived as positive (Noy 2004, p.84).

Mastery and competence through leisure activities has been a common theme in contemporary leisure studies (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 1988, 1990, 1997, Stebbins 1982) and reflects a developmental approach to leisure. Such approaches have their beginnings in the Greek classical leisure ideal, which as mentioned before, positioned leisure as a goal in life (Veal & Lynch 2001). The classical leisure ideal not only characterised leisure through a sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation, but also viewed leisure as ultimately undertaken for learning for its own sake and self-development or personal growth (de Grazia, 1962, Veal & Lynch 2001). Goodale and Godbey (1988, p.38) noted the linkages between leisure, freedom and knowledge: “importantly, is the link between learning and the leisure ideal held out by the early Greek philosophers. Knowledge has always been related to freedom, and freedom has always been related to leisure.” The relationship between knowledge or insight and freedom has a rich philosophical history, including Immanuel Kant’s equation of ‘personal enlightenment’ with the ability to think for oneself (Abbott 2001), with the latter claimed to rest on the requirement of freedom (Foucault & Lotringer 1997). Moreover, in his 1894 Philosophy of Freedom, Steiner (1995) also proposed knowledge, or the process of thinking, as the key to individual freedom.

Rhetoric of knowledge and development has by no means escaped travel discourse. As Rojek (1993, p.175) pointed out, albeit with a subversive aim:
Travel is seen as pursuing the ageless aristocratic principle of broadening the mind... Travel is required to yield an intensified, heightened experience of oneself. It shakes you up in order to make you a more mature, complete person.

Returning to Iso-Ahola’s (1982) discussion of seeking-behaviour within tourism and leisure, he suggested that individuals may seek to learn about other cultures, while Crompton (1979) observed that tourists sometimes seek novelty and education. In Hannerz’s (1990) discussion of cosmopolitanism, it was suggested that skills could be gained so as to be more at ease within other cultures. Cohen (2006, p.80) observed that travellers, like students and spiritual seekers, “hope to gain deeper and new understandings of the world and oneself.”

Wang (1999, p.363) noted that perceived challenges can become rare for some individuals in ‘everyday’ life, and resultanty, individuals may turn to travel and other forms of adventure that can lead to a “trial of the self.” Travel has been described as an escape from the mundane that may pose challenging situations with perceived risks often taken by the traveller at both physical and psychological levels (Weber 2001). Wang (1999, p.363) further held that through overcoming challenges “a new self is made.” Elsrud (2001, p.597, 598) noted that “independent traveling, such as long-term global backpacking, is often presented as an adventurous lifestyle, accrediting the traveler with knowledge and a stronger sense of identity” as “the adventurous traveler seeks to get away from the rest, to discover a true ‘self’.” For example, White and White (2004) found that long-term travellers in the Australian Outback were seeking physical and cultural challenges that allowed a sense of testing oneself. Travel had reportedly provided these travellers with “an environment in which people could test themselves, and a space in which to search for a revitalized sense of self” (White & White 2004, p.212).

Moreover, Elsrud (2001, p.598) noted how a “risk and adventure narrative” is “manifested and expressed” within traveller communities, wherein negotiating risky activities allows individuals to narrate self. Shulman, Blatt and Walsh (2006, p.236), in their study of Israeli backpackers, noted that the participants sought “extreme physical and emotional experiences” in order to facilitate “higher self-awareness.” Elsrud (2001) situated these claims as part of a larger risk and adventure narrative that positions the ‘developing world’ as a site for risky and rewarding independent journeying. This was supportive of Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2004, p.69) claim that “one of the central features of backpacker travel is exploration, both of self and of new ‘peripheral’ places.”

Thus, it seems that within leisure and tourism, individuals may seek personally challenging experiences that provide opportunities for learning and self-testing. This has also been exhibited by growth in activities said to provide ‘adventure’, such as those falling under
the heading of adventure tourism and adventure recreation (Ewert & Jamieson 2003). Vester (1987, p.237) highlighted adventure’s role within leisure also as an escape from the mundane:

To the extent that leisure is considered as an opportunity of overcoming the mundane social world and its everyday routines, adventure appears as a kind of promised land because of its extra-mundane qualities.

Moreover, Vester (1987) suggested that adventure may allow for feelings of freedom and personal expression.

While much of the theory concerning the motivations for engagement in adventure experiences has focused on the notion of seeking risk (Ewert 1989), there has also been evidence given that individuals seek personal insight or ‘fulfilment’ through the challenges of adventure (Walle 1997, Weber 2001). It is this notion of insight, rather than the deliberate seeking of risk, that can be related back to developmental perspectives on leisure. Thus, researchers have linked risk-taking adventures to Maslow’s (1971) self-actualisation (Walle 1997), derived out of the notion that one ought to strive to develop and ultimately fulfil one’s potential. Within tourism studies, research that has discussed challenge, risk, insight, fulfilment and and/or adventure have typically imported evidence from within leisure theory (for instance Cary 2004, Macbeth 1988, Weber 2001), where individual leisure experiences have been widely explored under the rubric of the social psychology of leisure (Iso-Ahola 1980).

2.13.1 Flow experience

The development of skills and the idea of fulfilment through leisure have underpinned leisure theories such as Stebbin’s (1982) ‘serious leisure’ and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) concept of ‘flow experience’. Rather than leisure as casual play, Stebbins (1982, p.267) suggested that leisure can be taken seriously, with his conceptualisation of serious leisure having required “the development of skills and knowledge, the accumulation of experience, and the expending of effort.” Stebbins (1982, p.253) further contended:

If leisure is to become, for many, an improvement over work as a way of finding personal fulfilment, identity enhancement, self-expression, and the like, then people must be careful to adopt those forms returning the greatest payoff. The theme here is that we reach this goal through engaging in serious rather than casual or unserious leisure.
More widely applied than Stebbin’s (1982) work, but of a similar vein, has been Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1988, 1990, 1997) used the term flow experience to describe an internal state of being that may accompany the experience of intrinsically motivated activities – those that can be perceived as freely chosen (Mannell, Zuzanek and Larson 1998). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) chose the name flow after many interviewees used the word to describe how this internal state of being characterised by flow experience being felt. The feeling of flow has been described as a focused concentration in which one experiences a loss of self-consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Ranging from rock climbers and sculptors to dancers and surgeons, Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) interviewees reported that a common state of mind developed when engaging in their activity, supporting the concept of flow experience and leading to the conclusion that flow can occur in nearly any activity that allows for increasing difficulty.

Flow experience’s most fundamental requirement is that the conditions required for one to enter a state of flow are continually evolving and become more challenging as one’s level of expertise increases, thereby requiring the participant to engage in a process of ongoing learning and coping (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). If an activity is below one’s skill level, the person may become bored. Inversely, if the activity is too difficult then the partaker may become anxious and stressed, to also be followed potentially by boredom. As it is often not easy to find the right level of challenge in flow experience, flow is not only variable, but also of a temporal nature (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). As such, finding a flow state of mind is typically associated with intense individual moments occurring during involving activities (Jones, Hollenhorst & Perna, 2003, Ryan 2003). As a result of flow’s typical association with temporary enjoyment and activity, leisure literature has often adopted flow experience as a tool to help explain leisure motivation (Priest & Bunting 1993, Stein et al. 1995).

Much of the research that has commented on flow in leisure studies has tended to equate flow with sensation-seeking and thus overlook Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) original depiction of flow as a vehicle for personal development. This is similar to risk-seeking having been emphasised over insight-seeking in adventure recreation studies (Walle 1997). In line with the idea of gaining insight, Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p.41) had contended that “following a flow experience, the organization of the self is more complex than it had been before. It is by becoming increasingly complex that the self might be said to grow.” Hence, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggested that overcoming challenges through the repetition of flow activity results not just in repeated heightened states of being, but a route towards self-fulfilment.
While it was not readily recognised by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1988, 1990, 1997), flow experience strongly resembles aspects of Maslow’s (1971) conceptualisations of peak experience and self-actualisation. Transient moments of self-actualisation have been described by Maslow (1971) as ‘peak experiences’. Hence, it is clear that the historically constructed rhetoric of development and actualising one’s self has taken a prominent place within adventure and leisure discourse, wherein individuals may seek self-fulfilment through personal challenges, which reportedly result in the experience of heightened states of being, such as described by flow experience.

Although flow experience has not been widely applied in tourism research, there have been two notable exceptions. Macbeth (1988) used the flow experience model to explain why ocean cruisers engaged in cruising as a lifestyle. Macbeth (1988, p.219) suggested that the episodic nature of flow could be extended to “a lifestyle level of analysis” as “while on one level a lifestyle is simply made up of the sum of its parts, on another, it also transcends that sum.” Furthermore, in Cary’s (2004, p.68) description of ‘the tourist moment’ she suggested: “As a sacred journey, tourism foments the optimum conditions for experiencing a heightened state of being; or, for experiencing flow…The tourist moment (re)presents this feeling.” Cary (2004, p.63) also noted that the tourist moment, described as “a moment that simultaneously produces and erases the tourist-as-subject,” represents a temporary end to the tourist’s quest for authenticity, the subject of the next section.

2.14 Searching for authenticity

There are similarities between discussions of freedom within leisure, wherein behaviour can be perceived as ranging from free to obligated, and the concept of authenticity in tourism studies, within which tourist behaviour has been suggested to range from inauthentic to authentic (Mannell & Iso-Ahola 1987). Within tourism scholarship, authenticity has historically been a key theme as it has been the subject of numerous debates over the last four decades (Reisinger & Steiner 2006), which is almost as long as the history of tourism studies itself (Sharpley 2003). However, authenticity does have a much longer history within existential philosophy where it has referred to the notion of an authentic self (Golomb 1995), rather than tourism’s earlier uses of authenticity in judging toured objects (MacCannell 1976). Yet, authenticity’s existential history has only been recently recognised within tourism studies (Steiner & Reisinger 2006). Hence, this section first traces authenticity’s starting point within tourism discussions on the authenticity of toured objects, before moving sequentially to its
more recent conceptualisation within tourism as an existential state linked to the experience of one’s true self.

The entry of authenticity into tourism studies is most commonly traced to Boorstin’s (1964) lamentation of the loss of the possibility of ‘real’ travel, which, as is discussed further in Section 3.2, was an attempt to dichotomise travellers and tourists. Boorstin (1964) criticised the growth of mass tourism and characterised tourists as a growing body of ‘cultural dopes’ satisfied by contrived ‘pseudo-events’. Hence, Boorstin implied that travellers have authentic experiences while tourists are happy with ‘diluted’ inauthentic experiences. In response, MacCannell (1976) posited, in his seminal work on authenticity, that tourists are not satisfied with pseudo-events, but instead are alienated moderns in search of authenticity. From this initial disagreement between Boorstin and MacCannell, sprang the long debate over the relevance of authenticity to tourism.

For MacCannell (1976, p.2) modernity appeared to moderns as anomic, or in his words, “as disorganised fragments, alienating, wasteful, violent, superficial, unplanned, unstable and inauthentic.” Hence, for individuals living in modernity, authenticity or ‘real’ life, was thought to be found outside of modernity in earlier historical periods or in other cultures with “purer, simpler life-styles” (MacCannell 1976, p.3). Thus, in a MacCannellian sense, travel is again two-fold as both an escape from the anomie of ‘inauthentic’ modernity and, in turn, a ‘quest’ for authenticity.

The notion of travel as a quest ties in with Graburn’s (1977) conceptualisation of tourism as a sacred journey and has parallels to traditional pilgrimage (Cohen 2006). Cohen (2006) used the comparison of travel to traditional pilgrimage to draw connections between travel, religion and education. Although, in the case of tourism as a kind of secular pilgrimage, MacCannell (1976, p.13) maintained that tourists are almost always frustrated in their attempts to see the authentic:

Sightseeing is a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience. Of course, it is doomed to eventual failure: even as it tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differentiation.

In contrast to MacCannell (1976), Cohen (1988) noted that not all moderns feel an alienation from modernity:
Those who continue to identify unreflectively with one or another of the centers of modernity such as the work-ethic or the ethos of material and occupational achievement, are personally less alienated than those who are not so identified. Those who are disposed to reflect upon their life-situation are more aware of their alienation than those who do not tend to such contemplation.

Hence, for Cohen (1988), tourists seek authenticity to varying degrees as a result of their relative perceived alienation from the institutions of modernity. For some tourists, such as Urry’s (2002) ‘post-tourist’, tourism is a game or form of play (Cohen 1995), for which authenticity is not important.

Wang (1999) entered the authenticity discussion in tourism by delineating the authenticity of toured objects, termed as objective and constructive authenticity and the authentic experience of one’s true self, which was introduced as existential authenticity. Objective authenticity is an extraction of authenticity from museum terminology (Wang 1999), where it is used to describe whether objects are genuine, real or unique (Sharpley 2003). On the other hand, constructive authenticity, which allows for an emergent aspect to authenticity, considers authenticity as variable, socially constructed interpretations of the genuineness of a toured object, including toured ‘Others’ (Reisinger & Steiner 2006, Wang 1999). Critical approaches have heavily criticised both these interpretations of authenticity for their neo-colonial ideologies, in which the Western stereotype of the ‘noble savage’ is unjustifiably projected upon natives in the ‘developing world’ (Wang 2000a).

Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p.69) have aimed further criticisms to what they have termed “a modernist sense of authenticity.” Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p.80) have contended that a postmodern approach contending that many tourists are no longer interested in authenticity, alongside constructive authenticity’s foundation that the authenticity of toured objects is relative and socially constructed, is a convincing argument to abandon both objective and constructive authenticity altogether within tourism research:

It is not possible to reconcile a determining, fixed, objective reality with socially or personally constructed multiple realities, especially while part of the research community is also arguing that such reconciliation is pointless and inconsequential anyway.

In a similar vein, Wang (1999) distinguished between objective and constructive authenticity as part of deconstructing them. For both Wang (1999) and Reisinger and Steiner (2006), the authenticity of toured objects is a dead end. However, unlike postmoderns, Wang (1999) and Steiner and Reisinger (2006) refuse to bury the concept of authenticity entirely. Wang (1999) also identified a third usage of authenticity, existential authenticity, a conceptualisation that
does not rely on the authenticity of toured objects and is suggested to have more power in explaining tourist experiences (Reisinger & Steiner 2006).

### 2.14.1 Existential authenticity

Existential inquiry into the idea of an ‘authentic self’ has a rich philosophical history with famous existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus and Sartre each having been concerned with the search for an authentic or true self (Golomb 1995). Baumeister (1986, p.93) has argued that concern over the authenticity of the self in the twentieth century “was a sign that the inner self, including the basis for choice, had become highly problematic.” Termed existential authenticity in much modern discourse (Kelner 2001, Kim & Jamal 2007, Miars 2002, Thompson, 2005), the concept has recently been an area of lively debate within tourism research (Kim & Jamal 2007, Steiner & Reisinger 2006, Wang 1999), despite academic discourse that has revealed the idea of a true self to be a historical social construction (Baumeister 1986, Foucault 1988). Proponents of existential authenticity have nonetheless claimed it is capable of explaining a wider spectrum of tourism behaviour than objective and constructive authenticity (Wang 1999). This is because existential authenticity can be applied to phenomena that are difficult to objectify, such as nature experiences and interactions between tourists (Wang 1999).

Existential authenticity has been described as a subjective state of being in which one experiences her/his ‘true self’ (Berger 1973, Wang 1999). Steiner and Reisinger (2006, p.303) held that “to be oneself existentially means to exist according one’s nature or essence.” This essentialist or transituational view of the self, which is again based on the assumption that a true self exists, lies at the core of existential authenticity.

The idea that the dictates of society become secondary to the authentic actions of the individual is a central tenet of existential authenticity (Golomb 1995). As Steiner and Reisinger (2006, p.311) put: “It is important in talking about authenticity to remember that it is always about free choices, not about maintaining traditions or being true to some past concept of individual, social, or cultural identity.” Thus, authenticity relates to the ability of the individual to ‘steer’ the self towards one’s own perceived goals while concurrently filtering through societal influences.

Nietzsche (1967) believed that if an individual is not able to express her/his self within society that a deepening sense of alienation will occur. This follows Cohen’s (1988) argument that increased alienation can intensify the process of the search for the authentic. In this line, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Heidegger all claimed that by rejecting what one is not,
one becomes who one ‘truly’ is (Golomb 1995). Yet, rather than behaving according to the authentic self, Heidegger (1962) claimed that humans tend to behave inauthentically. Steiner and Reisinger (2006) argued that many people tend to ignore their self and choose from common possibilities that are shared with others. Golomb (1995) suggested that following the ‘herd’ allows for escape from the anxiety and responsibility of individual freedom. Kim and Jamal (2007, p.184) noted that being freer from the constraints of daily social norms allows for individuals to develop experiences that “lead them towards an authentic sense of self rather than being lost in public roles.” Thus, a perceived truer sense of self was suggested as occurring more easily in liminal spaces where social norms have been identified as being weaker (Wang 1999).

As existential authenticity has a temporal component, Erickson (1995, p.124) stated that the individual determines moment by moment whether to exist “wholly by the laws of their own being.” Miars (2002) also argued, from a counselling perspective, that being entirely existentially authentic is a difficult task that no one will ever fully complete. Thus, existential authenticity might be taken as an ideal to strive towards on a moment to moment basis. Golomb (1995, p. 54) summarised this ‘journeying’ conceptualisation of authenticity through Kierkegaard’s position that existing is to be in the process of becoming one’s self and that “becoming authentic requires perpetual movement without definite results.” Moreover, Erickson (1995) suggested that individuals are not aware of their authenticity on a moment to moment basis. Awareness was said to depend on an occurrence that calls into question one’s self-conceptualisation and triggers reflection on whether we have been true to our self or not (Erickson 1995).

Existential authenticity’s utility has often been questioned, especially for its “lack of clarity in its presentation” and for being positioned as an unattainable ideal (Dougherty 2007, p. 97). However, another problem with authenticity, recognised by existential philosophers themselves, is the difficulty in recognising instances of authenticity (Golomb 1995). Criteria have not been given by the existentialists as to what is authentic and what is not. Furthermore, any act may be authentic depending on the individual – even acts that appear to be directly in line with societal ‘norms’. The existentialists argued that in principle, any definition of authenticity would be self-nullifying as it is an ideal with a different formula for each individual; what is authentic for one person may not be authentic for another (Golomb 1995).

Existential authenticity calls for the individual to be in a process of “being in touch with one’s inner self, knowing one’s self, having a sense of one’s own identity and then living in accord with one’s sense of oneself” (Steiner & Reisinger 2006, p.300). Accordingly, the
Romantic quest for freedom to be one’s self has been likened to the existential quest for authenticity, as both concern questions and problems surrounding the twentieth century struggle for a coherent sense of self (Baumeister 1986). However, while the discourse on self-actualisation included moral criteria (Baumeister 1996), existential authenticity does not (Golomb 1995). Existential authenticity’s lack of moral criteria is remarkably similar to Foucault’s (1984) notion of the care of the self, as discussed in Section 2.8. Existential philosophers agreed that each individual is capable of judging the relative authenticity of an act for one’s self. Unable to provide a universal definition of authenticity, the existentialists mostly conceptualised the ideal in reverse by describing what is inauthentic (Golomb 1995), tending to identify inauthenticity with conformity to social norms.

The gravest concern for existential authenticity’s utility exists from threats within poststructural discourse that has attempted to devalue the notion of the authentic in terms of the original (Golomb 1995). However, Wang (1999) argued that the deconstruction of the authentic when applied to the self opened the way for alternative experiences of existential authenticity. Golomb (1995) further rebuked poststructural claims that authenticity is empty by citing the passion of authors and philosophers for the concept over the past two centuries, as well as the ‘clamour’ of individuals today who wish to overcome the depersonalising and levelling forces of society and try to live ‘genuinely’. Furthermore, Golomb (1995) held that since there is no proof that authenticity is impossible, the search for it will continue. He (1995, p. 205) lastly affirmed that “to be human is to search for one’s true self.” Yet, Golomb (1995) clearly assumed that a true self exists. However, as Gergen (1991, p.7) suggested, the multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships that exist in postmodernity “pull us in myriad directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an ‘authentic self’ with knowable characteristics recedes from view.” Thus, for postmoderns, finding one’s authentic self loses all meaning as a ‘bombardment’ of external images erodes the sense of an authentic core (Cote & Levine 2002, p. 41).

2.15 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the concept of self, as well as several key linked concepts related to avoidance and seeking-behaviour in the context of leisure travel, which included the notions of seeking escape, freedom, self-insight through challenge and authenticity. The review was aimed at establishing a conceptual starting point for an empirical examination of the role of the search for self in the context of lifestyle travellers. The chapter began by offering definitional bases for delineating self and identity and by setting the focus of the
thesis within self, as the thesis is primarily concerned with individual’s experiences of who they are rather than the discursive construction of identity positions. The chapter then moved on to the use of a historical approach in order to highlight the idea of an essentialist self as socially constructed and historically situated. The historical reconstruction of the concept of self served in illustrating and deconstructing the underpinnings of modern rhetoric based on self-development and finding one’s true self.

Shifting away from self as an innate inner quality, the review turned to relational dimensions of self and examined theories that have situated self as a linguistic or discursive construction. Next, the relationship between the power of discourse and the role of the individual was mediated through a performative lens, before addressing the tensions that may exist for individuals in late modernity who still search for a unified sense of self among an increasing variety of life options. The review of self was then focused within the context of tourism studies, as it was demonstrated that leisure travel has been positioned as a particularly fomentive context for the (re)construction of selves.

Following the discussion of self, the chapter examined escapism as one of several key concepts linked to the notion of searching for self. Escapism, as a potential motivator for travel, was discussed in terms of escape from one’s interpersonal world, wider aspects of society and movement away from one’s current ideas of self. Escape was then considered in tandem with freedom, as feelings of freedom have been conceptualised as integral to perceptions of leisure and tourism experiences. In addition to the notion that individuals seek escape in order to find freedom, including a freedom to search for self, it was suggested that individuals may seek personally challenging experiences that provide opportunities for learning and self-insight. Finally, the chapter addressed the search for authenticity in tourism, as whilst the authenticity of toured objects has been heavily criticised, there has in its place been a growing interest in existential authenticity, which has been conceptualised as the experience of one’s true self.

Throughout the conceptual review, it has been clear that the Western notion of each individual having a true inner self is a historical social construction rather than a given natural entity. However, while a person may outwardly display multiple social selves that are fluid and unfolding over time, inwardly, many modern individuals still seek to construct a coherent and meaningful narrative of self. Although the modern concepts of seeking escape, freedom, self-insight through challenge and authenticity mostly break down without a true self or singular reality on which to rest, this has not prevented academic research, the present thesis non-exempt, from continuing to examine these concepts. For recent academic literature, especially within the discourse on travel and backpackers, has still posited that individuals
seek to escape their home environments and find a free space within which to challenge notions of self.

Moreover, the literature has suggested that the vocabulary of Romanticism, including words such as escape, freedom, true self, authenticity and adventure are particularly relevant among long-term travellers, who may seek an accumulation of experience ‘outside’ of the structures of ‘mainstream’ society, within which to find one’s ‘true self’. Thus, it seems that issues surrounding the search for self may be of particular relevance for lifestyle travellers, for whom the cultural context of long-term travel is not just a moratorium that takes place at a juncture in life, but is a way of life in itself. As this thesis examines the search for self through the lens of lifestyle travellers, the next chapter conceptualises lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research.
3.1 Introduction

The question of whether there is a difference between the notions of ‘traveller’ and ‘tourist’ has been an ongoing area of debate in tourism research (Boorstin 1964, Dann 1999, Galani-Moutafi 2000, Jacobsen 2000, Welk 2004), as well as being a vibrant discussion topic amongst travellers themselves (O’Reilly C.C. 2005, Riley 1988). Not only has it been reported that travellers self-define themselves as different than tourists (O’Reilly 2005, Riley 1988), but also within the leisure traveller population itself, commonly known as ‘backpackers’ (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995), niches have developed that indicate that this group is not homogenous but in fact multifaceted (Nash 2001, Sørensen 2003).

Sørensen (2003) has suggested that the heterogeneity of the backpacking market justifies further research into its specific sub-types. While research has been undertaken that investigates what may be termed the ‘contemporary backpacker’ (Noy 2004, O’Reilly 2006, Sørensen 2003, Uriely et al. 2002), Cohen (2004) has noted that there is a dearth of research on ‘contemporary drifters’, those who seek to set themselves apart from mainstream backpackers just as backpackers define themselves in opposition to tourists. Within the backpacker label, there exist a small proportion of individuals for which travel is not a cyclical break or transition to another life stage. For these individuals, leisure travel can serve as a way of life that they may pursue indefinitely. This chapter conceptualises these individuals as ‘lifestyle travellers’, a less pejorative term than ‘drifter’ (Cohen 1972) or ‘wanderer’ (Vogt 1976), which I have chosen to describe individuals that engage in long-term travel as a lifestyle.

As this thesis investigates the search for self in the context of individuals that travel as a lifestyle, this chapter conceptualises lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research. Thus, the chapter begins with a critical review of the supposed traveller/tourist divide and a consideration of the role of anti-tourism in constructing traveller identities. It then traces the development of the concept of the traveller over time from Cohen’s (1972) drifter, a term described in detail below as an idealised form of wanderer that has inspired modern backpacker idealism, through to the current state of the backpacking literature. This is done in order to provide a historical basis from which lifestyle travel has emerged that serves to situate lifestyle travel in relation to the theory on backpacker tourism. In finally delineating
travel as a lifestyle, the use of lifestyle theory is employed to justify lifestyle travellers as an identifiable lifestyle group.

3.2 A hypothetical traveller/tourist divide

Attempts at a distinction between traveller and tourist have regularly resurfaced in the academic literature and electronic discussions among tourism professionals (Dann 1999). One method of exploring a supposed division has been etymologically. Fussell (1980) explained that ‘travel’ is derived from the word ‘travail’, which in turn was taken from the Latin ‘tripalium’, referring to a three-staked instrument of torture designed to rack the body. Thus, travel has been conceived as “laborious or troublesome” and the traveller “was an active man at work” (Boorstin 1964, p.84-85). In contrast, and appearing later chronologically, the word ‘tourist’ was derived from the Latin ‘tornus’, based on a Greek word for a tool that describes a circle (Boorstin 1964). As such, Boorstin (1964) purported that the nature of travel changed with the decline of the traveller and the rise of the tourist, with the former working at something and the latter being a pleasure-seeker.

An association between travel and work can be linked to the Grand Tours of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, undertaken primarily by affluent young males (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). These tours were depicted as a form of education, a finishing school in which travel was intended to increase one’s worldliness, social awareness and sophistication (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). As such, the Grand Tour was romanticised as being of educational value, rather than as a domain for seeking pleasure. Whether these tours were in fact also hedonistic, is beside the point for the moment, as the focus here is on how a privileged class composed mainly of well-off, white, European males (Galani-Moutafi 2000) came to view themselves, at least outwardly, as elite travellers enhancing their educations.

Further seeking to show how distance came to be perceived between a traveller and a tourist, Fussell (1980, p.39) suggested that the Grand Tour pre-dated tourism, having pointed out that “before the development of tourism, travel was conceived to be like study, and its fruits were considered to be the adornment of the mind and the formation of judgment.” It comes as no surprise following this statement that the eventual development of mass tourism was viewed by many in the upper classes of Western society as signifying the end of the possibility of ‘real’ travel (Boorstin 1964). In his essay on the Lost Art of Travel, Boorstin (1964) lamented the growth of mass tourism, which was largely attributed to technological developments such as the railway. Whereas transportation had previously been quite
laborious, the industrial mass production of long-distance transportation, via railways and ocean steamers, made travel purportedly more pleasurable, cheaper and accessible (Boorstin 1964). As Boorstin (1964, p.86) complained, “thus foreign travel ceased to be an activity – an experience, an undertaking – and instead became a commodity.”

Boorstin’s (1964) lamentation of the decline of the traveller and the rise of the tourist helped to produce a dichotomy in the tourism literature within which the disappearing traveller was awarded the nostalgic prestige of earlier explorers and the proliferating tourist experience was pejoratively described as contrived, diluted and prefabricated. Thus, for some, the traveller can be positively valued while the tourist can be perceived negatively (O’Reilly C.C. 2005). Fussell (1980) has pointed out that the negative connotations ascribed to the word ‘tourist’ are even perpetuated within the tourism industry itself, as travel agencies elect to be called travel agencies rather than tourism agencies.

Moreover, Dann (1999) has recognised that many literary works have managed a traveller versus tourist distinction that parallels that of the sacred versus profane, and that this supposed distinction has allowed for broadly contrasting analogies of types of tourism as either a sacred journey (Graburn 1977) or as a game or form of play (Lett 1983). Within a traveller/tourist dichotomy, wherein travel is depicted as more ‘real’ or superior to tourism, it has become clear that the idea of the traveller is heavily based on anti-tourism and tourist angst (Dann 1999).

3.2.1 Anti-tourism in the construction of traveller identities

Dann (1999) suggested that the idea of travel is simply anti-tourism. Richards and Wilson (2004c, p.49) pointed out that in forming selves, “it is often easier to say clearly what one is not than what one is.” It has been noted that within the context of ethnicities, differentiation is often based against the community that lives closest to one’s own (Welk 2004). Welk (2004) also suggested that while a distinction can normally be made in territorial terms, it is also possible to differentiate a group based on a perceived symbolic basis. In the case of travellers, the closest perceived group in terms of form is mainstream tourists (Welk 2004 and Richards & Wilson 2004c made this comparison except having used the term ‘backpacker’ rather than traveller). In this light, Bruner (1991, p.247) alleged that a distinction between a tourist and a traveller can be reduced to “a Western myth of identity.” Consequently, a traveller identity is largely constructed through its opposition to the tourist role, or in other words, in opposition to what it hopes not to be.
Accordingly, while travellers may view the tourist experience as clichéd and devoid of spontaneity, in contrast the traveller’s experience is (re)produced as risky, exciting and imbued with freedom (Dann 1999, Fussell 1980). Welk (2004) further urged that the issue is best clarified by looking back in history to cultural origins in the hippie movement. The counterculture that Cohen (1972) based his conceptualisation of the ‘drifter’ on was a reaction against a ‘conformist’ parent generation, and as such, any divide between travellers and tourists has roots in both a class and generational conflict (Welk 2004).

However, Fussell (1980, p.49) critically surmised that the anti-tourist conviction that one is a traveller instead of a tourist is “both a symptom and a cause of what the British journalist Alan Brien has designated tourist angst, defined as ‘a gnawing suspicion that after all…you are still a tourist like every other tourist.’” For Fussell (1980), tourist angst is a class signal, extending back as described above to the Grand Tour, in which the anti-tourist, or traveller, is deluding her/himself. As Fussell (1980, p.49) continued “We are all tourists now, and there is no escape.”

3.2.2 But is there a difference between the tourist and traveller roles?

Thus, the question emerges as to whether travellers are distinct from tourists or in fact just tourists themselves. This can be addressed by both looking at what travellers say about themselves and deeper into the differences that the literature has suggested. With both of these methods, it is useful to clarify in advance between form and type-related attributes (Uriely et al. 2002). Form-related attributes refer to the arrangements and practices through which an individual constructs a journey such as style of accommodation or length of trip. On the other hand, type-related attributes are of a psychological nature, for instance, the meaning one assigns to a trip or motivations for travel (Uriely et al. 2002).

In terms of what travellers say about themselves, or self-definition, Welk (2004) claimed that travellers do not necessarily perceive themselves as ‘better’ tourists, but reject the tourist label altogether in exchange for the term traveller. Likewise, C.C. O’Reilly (2005) reported that traveller is the term preferred by most backpackers. In White and White’s (2004, p.202) study of mid-life and older long-term travellers in the Australian Outback, the terms traveller and travel were used in place of tourist and touring because the authors felt that the former terms “more accurately capture the meaning of these journeys for those undertaking them.” This was also evidenced in Richards and Wilson’s (2003) study in which over half of a 2,300 person sample identified themselves as travellers, around one third as backpackers and only one fifth as tourists. Particularly notable within Richard and Wilson’s
(2003) study was that younger persons were much more willing to accept the backpacker label than older persons.

In Davidson’s (2005, p.35) study of travellers in India, the majority of respondents were unhappy to describe their travels as ‘backpacking’ as the term “now conjures up images of young, privileged gap-year students.” In this sense, most of Davidson’s (2005, p.35) interviewees would have reportedly perceived the term ‘backpacker’ as “an insult to their status as travellers.” Moreover, in Riley’s (1988) study of long-term travellers, 100% of the interviewees rejected the tourist label, having justified themselves as travellers based on form differences of available time and money. Long-term travellers were conceptualised as rich in time but financially constrained. Dann (1999) distinguished between travellers and tourists by duration as well – having argued that tourists generally have less time at their disposal.

On the other hand, C.C. O’Reilly (2005) found that some travellers admitted there is not a real form difference between tourists and travellers, but did claim there are significant variances in their respective approaches to travel. Her interviewees cited the difference in approach to the individual’s openness to the experience as a ‘journey of self’ (type) rather than upon money or style of accommodation (form). In further highlighting that such type differences might exist between travellers and tourists, in Maoz’s (2004, p.114) study of Israeli travellers in India, interviewees reported they were on a “serious and profound inward journey” with a desire to ‘find themselves’; a quite stark contrast to Boorstin’s (1964) contrived tourist experience.

Thus, in regards to type-attributes, for travellers the distinction is made in that it is the journey rather than the destination that is important, as travel may be considered as an ‘inward voyage’ or ‘state of mind’ that embodies independence and freedom (Galani-Moutafi 2000, O’Reilly C.C. 2005). Galani-Moutafi (2000, p.205) described how an inward voyage may mirror the external physical journey wherein “a movement through geographical space is transformed into an analogue for the process of introspection.” In contrast, being a mass tourist purportedly may lack this transformative power (O’Reilly C.C. 2005). With this in mind, Welk (2004, p.90) re-emphasised the importance of time in journeying as a state of mind by having alleged that “the difference between the tourist and the traveller can be seen in that tourism is a temporary state of existence, while travelling is a permanent one.” However, to draw a line between travel and tourism based solely on the presence or not of a sense of inward voyage lays the distinction between traveller and tourist within subjectivism.

Even though academia has not come to agreement as to whether travellers and tourists do differ, it is clear enough that both form and type differences have been suggested in the literature. While these differences surely do not hold fast across all individuals nor represent
entirely distinct categories, it is likely that they do represent some broad trends that allow for the notion of the traveller to be teased out as a sub-type of the tourist. However, even if the form and type criteria for a traveller are not taken to differ significantly from the mass tourist (see Sharpley 2003), it is hard to overlook the emic perspective of the traveller, who has reportedly identified with the self-definition of traveller rather than tourist (O’Reilly C.C. 2005, Riley 1988, Welk 2004). Hence, anti-tourism allows for the construction of a distinct identity even if the reality may be taken as a contradiction (Welk 2004). Jamieson (1996) suggested that a perception of identity or status apart from other tourists is what in fact sets travellers apart from other tourists. As Welk (2004, p.90) suggested: “I think different, therefore I am.”

Nash (2001) has moved past the question of a traveller/tourist divide and suggested that travellers themselves are not even a homogenous group, and as such, it is important to specify which type of traveller one is talking about. In a similar vein, this chapter now does the same. In order to situate the concept of a lifestyle traveller in relation to the broader contemporary context of the ‘backpacker’, the focus now turns to how the tourism literature has historically framed the traveller as the antecedent to the backpacker, beginning with Cohen’s (1972) conceptualisation of the ‘drifter.’

3.3 From drifter to backpacker and beyond

Some of the academic (Cohen 1982, 2003, 2004, O’Reilly 2006) and popular literature (Garland 1997, Sutcliffe 1998) concerning travellers has highlighted a supposed institutionalisation of the backpacking phenomenon, comparing contemporary backpackers with conventional mass tourists, with the academic side normally tracing this development from its theoretical source in Cohen’s (1972) drifter ideal. To a degree, these works have lamented the loss of the drifter ideal and have helped to increasingly compartmentalise travellers as mainstream backpackers, resembling mass tourists, to the point where the term ‘backpacker’ has nearly replaced the word ‘traveller’ in certain regions (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). However, the literature has at times recognised that the backpacker market is heterogeneous (Nash 2001, Sørensen 2003, Uriely et al. 2002), which has opened the door to the study of its sub-types.

This chapter now turns to the academic development of the drifter role in order to examine how it has inspired the mythology of contemporary backpacking ideals. Rather than laying the drifter ideal to rest and homogenising all travellers under the broader rubric of the institutionalised backpacker, however, it is suggested that some travellers repeatedly exceed
the temporal boundaries that have traditionally situated backpacking as transitory, a rite-of-passage and/or a liminoid experience (Lett 1983, Turner 1977). Hence, it is argued that some travellers have established travel as their ‘normal’ way of life or lifestyle, rather than a break from it.

In outlining the historical origins of backpacker tourism, some researchers have pointed to the wider history of tourism and again located the starting point for backpacker theory within the seventeenth and eighteenth century European Grand Tour (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). Alternatively, others have begun a historical tracing of backpacking theory with Cohen’s (1972) conceptualisation of the drifter as the archetypal backpacker (Richards & Wilson 2004a). These divergent starting points offer quite different connotations, as while the Grand Tour is associated with education and supposed sophistication, drifting often carries derogatory connotations (Riley 1988).

A careful analysis of the literature does locate a degree of historical importance to the Grand Tour, but further questions how what was once largely the reserve of affluent upper-class youth came to bear deviant associations in the form of the drifter. Part of the answer may be found by examining another important pre-cursor to the backpacker, which is oft overlooked in backpacker studies, the nineteenth century ‘tramp’, a working class young adult male, who through vocational membership, followed a circuit of small-town craft society inns that supplied accommodation and work (Adler 1985). Distinguishable from the Grand Tours of affluent upper-class youth, the tramping system was borne out of economic necessity among the working class. At the level of motivation, however, both the Grand Tour and the tramping system supplied a ritual separation from family to foment the transition into adulthood, as well as providing the opportunity for adventure and education (Adler 1985).

But increased urbanisation and industrialisation around the beginning of World War I spelled the decline of organised craft associations (Alder 1985). Many young working class males continued the tramping form, but as they were no longer legitimised by the craft societies, their mobility came to be viewed as a social problem, almost a type of vagrancy (Adler 1985). Adler (1985) suggested that the literature on youth travel shifted to represent this new image of travelling youth as a form of juvenile delinquency. Hence, while tourism among the middle classes grew with the establishment of mass produced long-distance transportation in the twentieth century (Boorstin 1964) and travel continued to play a role in lives of young people, for the latter it changed in that their travels began to be perceived by society as hedonistic and even anarchistic – a form of escapism (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). This was also largely due to an increasing association with the ‘hippie counterculture’ of the 1960s (O’Reilly 2006).
1960s counterculture largely stemmed from a generational values conflict between dissatisfied youth and an allegedly conformist parent generation (Welk 2004), and as such, was “both a symptom and expression of broader alienative forces” (Cohen 1973, p.94). A large section of alienated youth in developed Western countries in the 1960s were mainly articulating a political statement against the growing cultural and political homogeneity of the period, with one primary area of expression taking place through opposition to the Vietnam War (Ateljevic & Doorne 2004). Severingly running counter to the values of mainstream society, the counterculture became associated with rebellion, drug usage and anarchic values (Ateljevic & Doorne 2004), but to the youth themselves, their movement represented a mission, a chance to revolutionise their home societies (Welk 2004).

One distinctive means through which countercultural adherents expressed themselves was through travel, as travelling fitted “admirably the style of life and the aspirations of the members of the ‘counterculture’” (Cohen 1973, p.93). Even popular literary works of the time such as Kerouac’s (1957) *On the Road* and Hesse’s (1964) *The Journey to the East* helped to link countercultural values to mobility. In addition to travel in Europe and North America, it became increasingly common in the late 1960s and early 1970s for Western youth seeking what they perceived as a more meaningful or authentic cultural existence (Ateljevic & Doorne 2004) to follow what became known as the ‘hippie overland trail’ from Europe to India and Nepal (MacLean 2006, Tomory 1996).

This overland route, followed by hundreds of thousands of young Westerners, began in Istanbul and crossed through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, before often finishing in Nepal (MacLean 2006). India and Nepal signified the end of the road for these travellers as the counterculture had idealised the Indian subcontinent as the pinnacle of ‘alternative lifestyle’ destinations (Tomory 1996), and popular discourse about the subcontinent had promised adventure, an ‘earthly utopia’, and even enlightenment (MacLean 2006). Indeed, with many disaffected countercultural youth seemingly in search of a utopia, More’s (1516) *Utopia*, a literary piece that described a socialised utopian island nation and influenced the revival of hippie communes during the countercultural period (Baumeister 1986), appears to have influenced these idealistic wanderers. Interestingly, it seems that for many young travellers, while the overland route had spiritual connotations that theoretically support tourism as a sacred journey or secular pilgrimage (Graburn 1977), the route also, especially to its moral critics, was viewed as hedonistic.

As the overland trail from Europe to Asia grew in popularity with primarily young travellers, and alienated Western youth increasingly ‘drifted’ through other parts of the world, both popular literature and academia picked up on the phenomenon. Michener’s (1971) *The
Drifters served as a fictional account of the travels of several alienated youth during the period and Cohen (1972) conceptualised the drifter type within tourism studies as part of a broader endeavour to establish a tourist typology. Cohen’s (1972) seminal work on a sociology of tourism spawned not only several other of his own publications that expanded on the notion of the drifter, but also established the drifter as an archetypal or idealised traveller, currents of which still run through modern-day backpacker theory and ideology. As Cohen (2004, p.44) suggested: “If the model for the drifter was the tramp, the drifter is the model for the backpacker.”

3.3.1 The drifter ideal

Cohen’s (1972) discussion of the drifter included his conceptualisation of the ‘explorer’, with both of these types described as ‘noninstitutionalised’ tourist roles that were loosely linked to the tourist establishment. A drifter was originally depicted by Cohen (1972, p.168) as:

This type of tourist ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life of his home country. He shuns any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and considers the ordinary tourist experience phoney. He tries to live the way the people he visits lives, and to share their shelter, foods, and habits, keeping only the most basic and essential elements of his old customs. The drifter has no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel.

In contrast to the drifter, whom Cohen compared to the ‘wanderer’ of previous times (although without explanation as to who constituted the latter), Cohen (1972, p.168) described the explorer as the traveller of former years, who does not, however, try to identify with the ‘natives’ and become one of them during her/his stay.

The explorer arranges his trip alone; he tries to get off the beaten track as much as possible, but he nevertheless looks for comfortable accommodations and reliable means of transportation. Though novelty dominates, the tourist does not immerse himself completely in his host society, but retains some of the basic routines and comforts of his native way of life.

Although Cohen (1972) equated the explorer with the traveller of former years, both his future research (Cohen 1973, 1982, 2004) and much of the other research that traces the ‘evolution’ of backpacking (Maoz 2004, O’Reilly 2006, Richards & Wilson 2004a, Welk 2004) has instead centred on the notion of the drifter as the primary precursor to the
contemporary backpacker. This was largely influenced by Cohen’s (1973, p.90) conclusion that drifting had moved in a short space of time from a minor phenomenon into “one of the prevalent trends of contemporary tourism,” as the most popular and widespread form of travel for the Western younger generation.

Cohen (1973) supported that the popularity of drifter travel was due to its strong connection with the counterculture. He suggested that the mobility of drifting aided in the loosening of ties and obligations, the abandonment of accepted norms, and the search for sensual experiences (Cohen 1973). Not surprisingly, as with the counterculture in general, ‘drifting’, a derogatory term in the eyes of ‘mainstream’ society, not unlike tramping, came to be associated with deviancy, as a marginal and unusual activity undertaken by society’s ‘dropouts’ (O’Reilly C.C. 2005, 2006). Even the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines drifter as ‘one that travels or moves about aimlessly’, which carries pejorative overtones regarding a lack of self-propulsion.

In a further effort to typologise tourists, Cohen (1979) proposed that ‘serious’ drifters could be compartmentalised under what he referred to as ‘experimental mode’, which characterised individuals that were pre-disposed to trying out alternative ways of life as part of a quest for meaning. These experimental travellers were purported to be in “search of himself” as part of a trial and error process (Cohen 1979, p.189). However, Cohen (1982, p.221) lamented that most young travellers do not even qualify as part-time drifters, and even at this early stage in the drifter literature, he suggested that most youth travel “in a conventional style characteristic of the institutionalized mass tourist,” a statement that, as is discussed in Section 3.3.4, seeded much of the later backpacker literature that emphasised the homogenisation of the backpacker.

3.3.2 Attempts at a less pejorative term than ‘drifter’

Apparently in an effort to defuse the hedonistic connotations of the drifter, Vogt (1976) and Riley (1988) attempted to conceptualise independent travel under different terminology. Vogt (1976) claimed that the primary motivation of wandering youth, as opposed to being aimless, was personal growth and accordingly called his young travellers ‘wanderers’. Akin to Cohen (1979), Vogt characterised this type of travel as exploratory, offering ways to learn about the world and self and undertaken mostly by middle-class students on a moratorium from study. Vogt’s (1976) wanderer concept seems to have been an attempt to realign travel with the educational value of the Grand Tour (O’Reilly 2006), and to distance it from the negative associations of tramping and drifting.
In contrast to both Vogt (1976) and Cohen (1972), Riley (1988) protested the wanderer concept as being limited to relatively short-term young travellers, mainly composed of students, and also suggested that the derogatory drifter label had been misleading in connoting deviant behaviour. Riley’s (1988) argument was based on a judgement that the demographics and motivations of the population engaging in independent travel had shifted in a generation to include individuals that could not be characterised as youth dropouts or just students on a break. In comparison, these travelling individuals were supposedly at a juncture in life, as opposed to generally aimless, hailed from middle-class backgrounds, and were on average older than the earlier travellers (Riley 1988). Hence, unlike Cohen (1972) and Vogt (1976), who focused on young travellers, Riley (1988) found most of her travellers to be in their late twenties and early thirties, and with one of her interviewees being sixty years old, she placed no age restrictions on long-term travel.

Riley (1988) managed a conceptual distinction between travellers and shorter-term tourists using Graburn’s (1983) division of modern tourism into two modes. The first was annual vacations that “mark the progress of cyclical time” and the second was “rite-of-passage” tourism, which was described as taking place at the junction of major changes in life relating to, for instance, adulthood, career and/or relationships (Graburn 1983, p.12). Riley (1988) suggested the phrase ‘long-term budget traveller’ as a less pejorative and more accurate way of depicting individuals who engaged in rite-of-passage tourism. ‘Long-term budget traveller’ was also intended to reflect that the extended length of the individual’s travel required most people to operate on a budget. As such, it was assumed that the tourist had limited time at her/his disposal whereas the traveller was abundant in time but was usually constrained by finances, and thus, self-imposed a budget in order to extend the travel period “beyond that of a cyclical holiday” (Riley 1988, p.317).

In summary, Cohen’s (1972) drifter, Vogt’s (1976) wanderer and Riley’s (1988) long-term budget traveller were each attempts to conceptualise travellers as distinguishable from tourists while representing what was perceived as the changing nature of independent travel. Although Vogt (1976) and Riley (1988) called out for a term with less derogatory connotations than ‘drifter’, their respective suggestions of ‘wanderer’ and ‘long-term budget traveller’ were not embraced within academia, and it was not until Loker-Murphy and Pearce’s (1995) introduction of the succinct label ‘backpacker’ into the academic literature that a less pejorative and more widely accepted term surfaced.
3.3.3 The growth of backpacking and backpacker research

As long-term travel grew in popularity, the term ‘backpacker’ took hold from the late 1990s (O’Reilly 2006) as a means of describing predominantly young, budget tourists on extended holiday (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). More structured than drifter travel but purportedly different from mass tourism, backpackers supposedly displayed a preference for budget accommodation, an independently organised and flexible schedule, longer holidays, an emphasis on meeting other travellers and locals, and a penchant for informal recreation activities (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). More recently, Maoz (2007, p.123) has described backpackers as “self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary,” many of which who are on a transitory leave from relative affluence.

Backpackers have historically been mainly of Western origin with the majority coming from Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America (Maoz 2007). However, with a significant population of Israeli backpackers, and a steady growth in Asian backpackers, particularly from Japan, the backpacker literature’s conceptualisations have been increasingly criticised as being too Western-oriented (Maoz 2007, Teo and Leong 2006). On the whole, growth in the backpacker industry has been substantial “over the past 30 years, progressing from a marginal activity of a handful of ‘drifters’ to a major global industry” (Richards & Wilson 2004a, p.10) that is now viewed by many as an accepted rite-of-passage for young people (O’Reilly 2006).

Along with the growing popularity of backpacking in recent years, academic interest in backpacking has also grown (Hannam & Ateljevic 2008). It has been noted that backpacker research has been generally divided between sociological and market-based approaches (Richards & Wilson 2004a, Wilson & Richards 2008a, 2008b). There have been a number of studies that have looked at identity-related issues in the context of backpacking, including themes of risk-taking, adventure, anti-tourism and narratives of self-change (Anderskov 2002, Desforges 1998, 2000, Elsrud 2001, Noy 2004, O’Reilly C.C. 2005, Welk 2004). Additional research, amongst others, has delved into backpacking as a means of escape (Ateljevic & Doorne 2000), form and type-related differences among backpackers (Uriely et al. 2002), the culture of backpacking (Muzaini 2006, Sørensen 2003, Westerhausen 2002), the roles of backpacker enclaves (Ateljevic & Doorne 2005, Wilson & Richards 2008a, 2008b), the specifics of Israeli backpackers (Haviv 2005, Maoz 2004, 2007, Noy & Cohen 2005, Shulman et al. 2006), social interactions of backpackers (Murphy 2001), the influence of travel writing upon backpackers (Richards & Wilson 2004c) and a postcolonial analysis of backpacking.
(Teo & Leong 2006). Additionally, there have been a number of market-based and development studies focusing on backpackers (see for instance Richards & King 2003, Richards & Wilson 2003, Richards & Wilson 2004b, Scheyvens 2002, Westerhausen & Macbeth 2003).

One other related theoretical point within backpacker research, as noted earlier in this section and expanded upon below, is that some of the literature has suggested an institutionalisation or ‘mainstreaming’ of the backpacking phenomenon (Cohen 2003, 2004, Hannam & Ateljevic 2008, O’Reilly 2006). This can largely be attributed to the commodification of the backpacker market, as backpackers are increasingly seen to follow the same distinctive trails, use the same guidebooks and gather in established backpacker enclaves, within which the backpacker “scene is (re)produced” (Sørensen 2003, Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003, Wilson and Richards 2008a, p.188).

3.3.4 The institutionalisation of backpacking

Many of the paths that backpackers follow are well-trodden in large numbers (Cohen 2004), and as such, a parallel travel system to mass tourism has developed that caters mainly to the backpacker market (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). Resultantly, contemporary backpackers utilising these facilities have not necessarily had to develop the skills and invest the effort in their trips that were attributed to the earlier drifters (Cohen 2004). Cohen (2004) has recognised that the figure of the drifter was, and still is (O’Reilly 2006), an ideal towards which many youth were attracted, but very few have attained. As O’Reilly (2006, p.1005) suggested “the ideal typical backpacker of today closely resembles the model set down by the hippie travelers of the 60s and 70s.”

The difficulty of living up to the drifter ideal is explained by Cohen’s (2004, p.45) admission that “drifting, as I have conceived it, appears to take much more competence, resourcefulness, endurance and fortitude, as well as an ability to plan one’s moves, even if they are subject to alteration, than I had originally surmised.” As mentioned previously, in contrast to the drifter concept, Cohen (1982, p.221) surmised that most young tourists, not then yet referred to as backpackers, travel in the style of “the institutionalized mass tourist.” In view of that, Cohen (2004) and O’Reilly (2006) have more recently decried the ‘mainstreaming’ of backpacking as it often now carries the same stigma of institutionalisation associated with mass tourism, especially along the more popular backpacker routes of Australia and Southeast Asia (O’Reilly 2006). However, as discussed in the following section, despite efforts to homogenise backpackers with mass tourists, there has been a
growing body of literature that has attempted to highlight heterogeneity within the backpacker label (see Ateljevic & Doorne 2000, Nash 2001, Sørensen 2003, Uriely et al. 2002).

3.3.5 Backpacker heterogeneity

Similar to the tourist angst that travellers reportedly harbour, there appears to exist within backpacking culture angst towards institutionalised backpackers (Richards & Wilson 2004c, Welk 2004). This comes as no surprise considering the backpacking ideal of the drifter is positioned in opposition to institutionalisation. Welk (2004) argued that the more involved travellers no longer strive to distinguish themselves from tourists, but instead from mainstream backpackers, especially the stereotype of the young party backpacker. Wilson and Richards (2008a, p.188) commented that this type of backpacker angst “is prevalent among older, more experienced independent travellers lamenting the loss of their pioneering travel styles due to the changing nature not only of tourism but also of backpacking.” In other words, Welk (2004, p.89) observed that for some travellers, “anti-tourism has given way to anti-backpacking as their main category of distinction.”

As evidenced in Loker-Murphy and Pearce’s (1995) re-centring of the traveller discussion around younger travellers, travellers of all ages are often herded under the backpacker label. This continues despite Riley (1988) having urged that older travellers also engaged in long-term travel as a rite-of-passage. Moreover, Westerhausen (2002) pointed out an increasing diversity of ages among backpackers as its appeal as a mode of tourism widened. Fittingly, Richards and Wilson (2004c, p.65) observed that “the backpacker as a clearly defined species of tourist is disappearing, just at the moment of its discovery.”

Ateljevic and Doorne (2000, p.131) noted that studies focusing on the backpacker market tended “to treat these travelers as a homogenous consumer group.” Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) instead suggested that there is heterogeneity under the backpacker umbrella term. Moreover, Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002, p.536) put forward that backpackers could be further classified into sub-types which might reveal similar groupings “in terms of their motivations and the meanings they derive from travel.” Helping to determine whether different sub-types existed within the backpacker label, Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) conducted research into the backpacking population in terms of form and type-related attributes. While they concluded that backpackers share a common identity based on form-related practices (length of time on road, budget, form of transport), it was also found that backpackers are heterogeneous in type, displaying varying motivations and attitudes (Uriely et al. 2002). These findings were supported by Sørensen (2003, p.848) who has suggested
that while backpacker facilities have become homogenised, its users seemed “more composite and multifaceted than ever.” As such, Sørensen (2003) called for further research into specific sub-types of the backpacker market.

Richards and Wilson (2004c) have suggested that rather than seeing backpackers as part of a general tourist typology, it might be more fruitful to consider backpackers along a continuum of ideologies of its own. In this vein, Cohen (2004) has noted that systematic research has not been undertaken into those travellers most closely reflecting the drifter ideal, who may seek to distinguish themselves from contemporary backpackers. Indeed, Uriely, Yonay and Simchay (2002) claimed that only a minority of backpackers are travelling in Cohen’s (1979) experimental mode, with many instead seeking the diversionary and recreational experiences of mass tourists. However, notably, among their (2002) interviewees were ‘serial’ or repeat backpackers who had often started their travels as recreational tourists and later switched into the experimental type. As Cohen (1979) has linked the experimental type with the more serious of the drifter segment, it is possible that Uriely, Yonay and Simchay’s (2002) serial or repeat backpackers may be linked to Cohen’s (2004) notion of the ‘contemporary drifter’, at least in a temporal sense. This temporal component informs the next section in this chapter, which looks at the notion of travel as a way of life.

3.4 Travel as a way of life

Generally, backpackers perceive their travels as a time out from their normal life-path (Elserud 2001) and/or as a self-imposed rite-of-passage (Graburn 1983, Maoz 2007), whether it occurs at the juncture between school and university, university and a career, or between careers (Cohen 2004). Maoz (2007) also suggested that some backpackers have experienced what may be described as ‘life crises’ prior to their journeys. However, while drifters of the 1960s and 1970s were described as “alienated individuals roaming the world alone” in reaction to a perceived value conflict with Western societies (Cohen 2004, p.44), estrangement from one’s home society is purportedly a less central theme to most modern backpackers (Maoz 2004). Correspondingly, the majority of backpackers expect to rejoin the workforce in their home society (Riley 1988) and re-engage with the lifestyle they had left at home (Sørensen 2003, Westerhaus 2002), as few view travel as a feasible indefinite alternative to a ‘normal’ career (Cohen 2004). Even Cohen’s (1972, p.176) original drifter was characterised as eventually settling down to an “orderly middle-class career” after a period of drifting.
However, in Riley’s (1988) study of long-term travellers, a small number of individuals were identified that did treat travel like a career. Cohen (1979) also observed that in some extreme cases, the more serious of the drifters, extended the search for meaning through travel into a way of life, essentially becoming ‘eternal seekers’. Accordingly, Noy and Cohen (2005, p.3) suggested that, for some, backpacking can cease to be a part of a transitional phase in life and can instead extend to “a way of life in itself.” This is further substantiated by Giddens’ (1991) assertion that as identity has become less staked out in post-traditional societies in late modernity, rites of passage as lifespan markers have become less relevant.

Likewise, Westerhausen (2002, p.154) noted the phenomenon of a growing number of individuals travelling into and beyond their thirties, suggesting that what was once largely the domain of youth culture, “now represents a lifestyle alternative for those at least temporarily unencumbered by family and professional responsibilities.” Westerhausen (2002, p.146) summarised this type of dedicated backpacker best in having stated that “for a sizable minority, being on the road becomes a preferred way of life to which they will return whenever the opportunity presents itself.” Moreover, Welk (2004, p.90) identified that for some backpackers “the journey is not designed to be an interruption from normality, it is normality; and it is not supposed to serve any goals beyond travelling itself.” Welk (2004) used this theme to try to distinguish between backpackers and travellers, having claimed that a backpacker becomes a traveller when travel becomes a way of life.

Hence, it is suggested that some individuals do not fit within the cyclical and/or temporal boundaries that have traditionally circumscribed the annual holiday and also situated backpacking as a rite-of-passage that is a transitory or liminoid experience (Lett 1983, Turner 1977). As such, some repeat or serial backpackers (Uriely et al. 2002) have inverted the traditional form of the cyclical holiday as a time-out from routine, and rather than treating tourism as a break, they have instead established travelling as a ‘normal’ way of life that they may pursue indefinitely. In this light, Graburn’s (1983) two modes of tourism – cyclical annual holidays and rite-of-passage tourism, falls short.

Noy and Cohen (2005) have suggested that ‘lifelong wanderers’ are difficult to locate as they often try to avoid tourist facilities, and as such, have rarely been the subject of research. An individual who repeatedly returns to long-term travel and considers travel to be her/his way of life, can aptly, and less pejoratively than ‘drifter’ or ‘wanderer’, be termed a ‘lifestyle traveller’. Lifestyle travellers reflect Cohen’s (2004) notion of ‘contemporary drifters’ and Noy and Cohen’s (2005) ‘lifelong wanderers’. As for the term ‘traveller’, as opposed to ‘backpacker’ or ‘tourist’, traveller is the self-defined label of most backpackers, especially older ones (Richards & Wilson 2003), as unlike the term ‘backpacker’, it does not primarily
connote transitional youth. Instead, ‘traveller’, as an identity perceived as set apart from a more temporally constrained ‘tourist’, emphasises a journey over time (Welk 2004), with an “assertion that travelling is a lifestyle or a ‘state of mind’” (O’Reilly C.C. 2005, p.158). In order to conceptualise travel as a type of lifestyle, and in doing so, further delineate lifestyle travellers as a viable corpus for research into the search for self, it is now useful to turn to the literature on lifestyle theory.

3.5 Travel in the context of lifestyle theory

The concept of ‘lifestyle’ has been employed across a number of disciplines (Veal 2001), but it has been Veal’s (1993) scholarship on defining lifestyle in leisure studies and Gidden’s (1991) sociological work on the importance of lifestyle to one’s sense of self that have chiefly provided this study with a workable platform for examining travel as a type of lifestyle. This section first looks broadly at lifestyle theory and then considers the importance of lifestyle to self in post-traditional contexts. Lifestyle is then examined in terms of perceived choice, in which ‘alternative lifestyles’ may articulate a social critique through which individuals sometimes attempt to distance themselves from a ‘traditional’ occupation-dominated way of life. Finally, long-term travel is conceptualised as a lifestyle in the context of lifestyle theory.

Wrong (1990, p.24) located the origin of the term ‘lifestyle’ as far back as Max Weber, but noted that within everyday usage, the word “spread like wildfire at the height of the student protest movements of the late 1960s.” As sociology students played a strong role in the countercultural protests, it was partly their familiarity with Weber on ‘style of life’, which informed their movement for a break from the past and the adoption of ‘alternative lifestyles’ (Wrong 1990). Within the academic literature, Veal (1993) recognised that a consensus had not been established on the meaning of the term lifestyle, as over thirty varying definitions had been offered. After a review of lifestyle theories within the context of its Weberian usage, as well as “sub-cultural, psychological, market research and psychographics, leisure/tourism styles, spatial, socialist lifestyles, consumer culture, gender, and miscellaneous approaches,” Veal (1993, p.233) later suggested lifestyle could be more clearly defined as “the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group” (p.247).

While the term lifestyle can be used in relation to either an individual or a group, Veal (1993) differentiated between a ‘subculture’ and a lifestyle based on group interaction. Although a lifestyle in which regular group interaction is fundamental can be termed a
subculture, not all lifestyles need frequently feature social contact among its adherents (Veal 1993). In other words, whilst all subcultures have a distinctive lifestyle, not all lifestyles constitute a subculture (Veal 1993). As the present research is primarily concerned with lifestyle travellers at the level of analysis of the individual, rather than their wider group interactions, their travels are interpreted here in terms of a lifestyle rather than a subculture. That being said, in addition to its largely shared ideology and praxis, travel does of course feature complex social interactions among travellers, which also constitutes it as a type of subculture (Macbeth 2000). Having recognised this, different studies that have been more concerned with the collective than the present one (see for instance Muzaini 2006, Sørensen 2003) have already chosen to investigate these social processes from a concept of culture, whereas academia has until now not investigated travel as a lifestyle.

In returning to an analysis of lifestyle, Veal (1993) held that most people seek ‘coherence’ in their lives, without necessarily finding it, and that many individuals are engaged in a ‘life task’ of establishing a set of activities or behaviours that ‘make sense’ to themselves. Also focused on lifestyle as a means through which individuals may attempt to make sense of their lives, Giddens (1991) theorised that the concept of lifestyle has become progressively more important in modern social life as tradition has continued to lose hold and the increasing affects of globalisation have forced many individuals to negotiate a larger variety of life options. The breakdown of traditional roles, which previously contributed to a more secure sense of self, has made in turn, for some, lifestyle choice critical in the (re)constitution of self (Giddens 1991). In contrast, lifestyle is suggested as having less applicability in traditional cultures where the options in constructing one’s life are more limited and identity tends to be ‘handed down’ rather than ‘adopted’ (Giddens 1991).

Thus, Giddens’ (1991) definition of lifestyle differs from Veal’s (1993) in that it is focused on lifestyle as a vehicle for forming a more coherent sense of self. Accordingly, Giddens (1991, p.81) defined lifestyle as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.” Semi-routinised practices such as habits of dressing, what to eat, choice of work (or even not to work) and ‘favoured milieux’ can become “decisions not only about how to act but who to be” (Giddens 1991, p.81).

As lifestyle is largely constituted by the choices a person makes each day (Giddens 1991), it has been strongly linked to degrees of freedom or choice (Veal 1993). Furthermore, Veal (1993) suggested that a perceived coherent lifestyle is likely to involve ‘optimal arousal’ for the individual, and this notion was supported by Macbeth (2000), who attributed the appeal of ocean cruising to its constituent parts combining to produce an intrinsically
satisfying lifestyle. Thus, it appears that perceived intrinsic motivation and freedom may play a role in lifestyle choice, as evidenced by Macbeth’s (1988) study of intrinsically derived ‘flow experience’ in the ocean cruising lifestyle.

In contrast to the privileged position of being able to choose among an array of lifestyles, some groups in society of course have less choice than others, with their way of life often imposed, rather than being a lifestyle choice (Veal 1993). That being said, many who do have the resources to engage in other ways of life are not always aware of the range of life options available to them (Giddens 1991). On that point, Giddens (1991) suggested that the more post-traditional the setting within which an individual operates, the more lifestyle concerns questions of self. Giddens (1991, p.80) noted that “by definition, tradition or established habit orders life with relatively set channels.”

Hence, lifestyle is often of particular significance to individuals engaged in ‘alternative’ ways of life that operate marginally to the ‘norms’, or traditional channels, of mainstream society (Metcalf 1995). In view of that, significant research has been conducted into the lifestyles of groups such as surfers, hippies, ocean cruisers, ravers and rural communards (Macbeth 2000, Malbon 1998, Metcalf 1995, Veal 1993), and much of this research has been concerned with issues of self, values and perceived resistance. In Macbeth’s (2000, p.28) study of the ocean cruising lifestyle, he observed that the adoption of a cruising lifestyle often reflects an uneasiness about mainstream society, in effect a social critique, as many ocean cruisers have perceived that “modern society is restrictive and saps personal choice and self-determination.”

In addition to ocean cruisers, as he describes as representative of a certain type of tourist, Macbeth (2000) also suggested that communal living, such as in Kibbutzim, and long-term travel may offer alternative views of how society might be constructed. Notably, each of the abovementioned groups seem to express a relative uneasiness with what Macbeth (2000, p.25) described as “the iterated structures of urban life and occupational imperatives of a career.” Likewise, Giddens (1991) urged that choice of work and work environment is fundamental to lifestyle orientations. So, it seems that much of the discussion on alternative lifestyles articulates a move away from traditional occupation-dominated lifestyles.

As long-term travel has traditionally been viewed as being counter to the norms of ‘mainstream’ society, and characterised by a high degree of perceived freedom (O’Reilly 2006), it can be justifiably considered as an ‘alternative’ lifestyle choice. Moreover, in most cases, the time commitment of lifestyle travel entails a move away from a career-dominated way of life. Lifestyle travel is a post-traditional context with its own ideologies and patterns of individual and group behaviour that are integrated not only at a functional level, but also
foment a space where individuals can (re)define their sense of self (Neumann 1992), and possibly seek coherence in order to try to ‘make sense’ of their lives.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has conceptualised lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research into the search for self. Through an examination of a historically constructed traveller/tourist divide, it has been shown that a traveller identity is largely borne out of tourist angst, wherein a traveller often self-defines/identifies in opposition to a tourist, her/his closest form. This self-definition through anti-tourism helps to cluster travellers into an identifiable group in its own right. Yet, there are also elements of travel itself, as a sub-type of tourism, which arguably allow for its differentiation. Travel itself tends to imply an extended journeying aspect, both outwardly and inwardly, that theoretically differs from mass tourism, which is often conceptualised as temporally constrained and perhaps, more playful. However, positioning travel as a form of secular pilgrimage as separate from mass tourism as a form of play is fraught with difficulties. For each individual’s experience is just that, individualised, with elements of work and play that likely blur and change over time and place.

The burgeoning literature on backpackers, a label descended from the pejoratively positioned drifter and tramp, reflects academia’s ongoing attempts to tease out the backpacker as a sub-type of the tourist. Backpackers have been characterised by the academe as journeying to multiple destinations for both longer than mass tourists and with a less organised itinerary and money per diem, all the while mostly utilising a backpacker infrastructure that has developed to capitalise on, and has reportedly homogenised, many backpacker needs. Yet, since its first use in academia, the backpacker label has been attached to the notion of youth (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995), forming a stigma for some older self-styled travellers to resist, who can now potentially add backpacker angst as a subdivision of their broader tourist angst. While it is clear that labels such as traveller, backpacker and tourist are contested notions, it seems that through the haze there is a temporal factor that repeatedly emerges if one wishes to distinguish amongst these identities and within them.

Within the backpacker label, which has been traditionally aligned with Graburn’s (1983) form of tourism as a temporary rite-of-passage, there exist a small proportion of travellers, as they like to call themselves (O’Reilly C.C. 2005, Richards & Wilson 2003, Welk 2004), for which travel can no longer be considered a break or transition in their life span. For these lifestyle travellers, repeated and extended temporal commitment to a travel lifestyle, involving its own ideologies, praxis and identities, has become a way of life in itself that they
may pursue indefinitely. Hence, lifestyle travellers, as the context for this research, represent
a lifestyle group that is an identifiable corpus for research. However, Veal (1993) challenged
researchers to move beyond the simple identification of lifestyle groups. As part of
expanding lifestyle research, Veal (1993, p.248) proposed as an empirical task:

…there is the question of the meaning and importance of actual or desired lifestyles
to the individual; is a desired lifestyle something which people take seriously,
replacing such factors as religion and morality in shaping people’s lives, or is it a
surface, ephemeral matter of little consequence?

As this thesis investigates the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers, it not only
conceptualises lifestyle travellers, but also addresses Veal’s (1993) challenge, and in doing so,
probes the meanings and importance that lifestyle travellers may attach to self.

Chapters Two and Three have demonstrated that the search for self is a potentially
fruitful area for research in the context of lifestyle travellers as travelling to ‘find one’s self’
has a lengthy literary tradition (Goeldner & Ritchie 2006) and several researchers have
suggested that the discourse of backpackers is largely organised around the construction of
2004c). Furthermore, Giddens (1991) noted that the concept of lifestyle has become
progressively more important in modern social life as tradition has continued to lose hold and
globalisation has forced many individuals to negotiate a broader array of life options. It has
been argued that the breakdown of traditional roles, which previously contributed to a more
secure sense of self, has made in turn, for some, lifestyle choice critical in the (re)constitution
of self (Giddens 1991). As such, Giddens (1991, p.81) has suggested that “the more post-
traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core
of self-identity, its making and remaking.” Hence, lifestyle travel, as both a post-traditional
lifestyle choice and a sub-type of backpacking, has been indirectly indicated in the literature
as a particularly fomentive environment for its participants to question self.

Thus, not only has it been demonstrated through the review of literature that a void
exists within tourism studies wherein individuals who travel as a way of life have not been empirically researched, but a number of issues have been identified that warrant primary research in the context of lifestyle travellers. In particular, the empirical research undertaken in this thesis aims to examine the meanings and importance that lifestyle travellers may attach to the search for self. This includes questioning if and how lifestyle travellers approach the search for self through their travels, potential changes in the search for self over time and how successful individuals may gauge themselves in their self-searching. Moreover, the primary
research with lifestyle travellers probes the importance and role(s) of issues surrounding the search for self that may influence why individuals travel as a lifestyle. As it has been identified that concepts such as escapism, freedom, challenge and authenticity have been located by both tourism studies and the wider social science literature as discourses that may inform the search for self, the empirical research asks the question of what roles, if any, these concepts may play in the context of searching for self through lifestyle travel? And lastly, the primary research seeks to identify the future travel intentions of lifestyle travellers and how these intentions may be influenced by the search for self. Indeed, whilst some of these questions have been asked of tourists and backpackers in general, as discussed throughout Chapters Two and Three, the present research is positioned to examine these issues in a context hitherto unexplored by the academe – the context of lifestyle travellers. As such, the thesis now turns in Chapter Four to the methodology and method that has been used to advance this research agenda.
Chapter Four – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

While the previous two chapters provided a conceptual framework for the aims of the thesis, this chapter focuses on the methodology and method employed to meet these aims. As the research objective is to examine the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers, the study has embraced methodological procedures that allow for inquiry into the meanings and experiences of lifestyle travellers. The aim of this chapter is to give a reflective account of the conduct of the research. The chapter begins by discussing the methodological framework employed in the thesis, and examines the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that flow out of the study’s grounding in the paradigm of interpretivism. Following this philosophical underpinning of the research, the general method of the study is outlined as semi-structured in-depth interviewing. The use in this thesis of qualitative interviewing is then located and justified with reference to prior tourism research.

The focus of the chapter then turns to my own background as a lifestyle traveller, as my prior experiences are identified as both influencing the choice of the research topic and informing and shaping the research process. Subsequently, the inclusion criteria for selecting lifestyle travellers are discussed in light of the conceptual underpinning of lifestyle travellers formed in Chapter Three and justification is given as to why northern India and southern Thailand were chosen as fieldwork sites for the study. The chapter next turns to the procedures that were undertaken for interviewing, including how the respondents were approached and an account of how the interviews were conducted. Finally, the chapter outlines the demographics of the respondents before detailing how the empirical material was interpreted.

4.2 Methodological framework

As the thesis is focused on the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers, the research attempts to make sense of, or interpret (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), the meanings that lifestyle travellers construct through travel. K. O’Reilly (2005, p.49) has suggested that “in order to understand the social world we need to get inside the heads of the individuals or groups we study and understand their meanings about what they are doing.” The social world is recognised as complex and most effectively understood from the point of view of those
living within it (Goodson & Phillimore 2004). As such, this research sits comfortably within the paradigm of interpretivism. From an interpretivist perspective, social action is inherently meaningful and the role of the researcher is to try to “grasp the meanings” that constitute an action (Lincoln & Guba 2003, p.296).

The paradigm, or set of beliefs about how the world operates (Goodson & Phillimore 2004, Jennings 2005), of interpretivism contrasts with positivist approaches that hold that there are universal truths. Instead, interpretivism holds an ontology (or worldview) that reality is relative and thus recognises multiple perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, Jennings 2005). In this light, “researchers as well as the researched construct their own multiple versions of reality” (Goodson & Phillimore 2004, p.40). Stemming from an ontology of multiple constructed realities is the epistemological stance, or theory of how knowledge is constructed (Goodson & Phillimore 2004), that knowledge is subjective (Jennings 2005). Social knowledge is, therefore, an interactive and situationally constrained process shaped by both the researcher and those being researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Accordingly, observations and knowledge claims are not objective, but are instead socially-situated and co-created between the observer and the observed (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

Interpretive research calls for a methodological approach based on qualitative principles and procedures (Jennings 2005). As a strategy of inquiry, qualitative research seeks to understand “how social experience is created and given meaning” and is committed to case-based positions (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, p.13). A qualitative research design is linked to the use of certain tools or methods for collecting empirical material (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, Goodson & Phillimore 2004). As this thesis has used qualitative guidelines as its methodological approach in attempting to understand the meanings and experiences of the case of lifestyle travellers, the focus now turns to the method employed in the study.

4.3 General method employed

The empirical evidence for this research was generated using semi-structured in-depth interviewing. Jennings (2005) has noted that the semi-structured in-depth interview is associated with the interpretivist paradigm as qualitative interviews allow for the interpretation of multiple perspectives in regards to a phenomenon being studied. Also, it has been suggested that interviews are arguably a type of observation themselves, as during interviews the researcher is also observing (Jennings 2005). However, the use of qualitative interviewing calls for an acknowledgement of “the complex, messy nature of human lives and understandings” and should respect “the irreducibility of human experience” (O’Reilly K.
Since this thesis is concerned with the role of the search for self among individual lifestyle travellers, semi-structured in-depth interviewing was a clear choice as an appropriate method, as it allowed for the meanings held by each respondent to be individually voiced from the point of view of those studied (Palmer 2001).

The use of semi-structured open-ended interviews afforded sufficient flexibility to explore issues in detail as they arose during the interviews, while also having provided a structure to the interview process that ensured that the empirical material collected was relevant to the aims of the thesis (Jennings 2001). In contrast, unstructured interviews would have lacked the agenda needed to meet the aims of the thesis whilst a structured interview schedule may have limited the emergence of new themes (Jennings 2005). Furthermore, the use of group interviews was discounted in favour of one-on-one interviewing as the social nature of group interviews would have likely biased the interviewees’ responses to personal lines of questioning (Creswell 2003).

In reference to previous related tourism research, several other researchers have chosen to use semi-structured in-depth interviewing in projects relating to the meanings travellers and/or backpackers assign to experiences (see Anderskov 2002, Davidson 2005, Desforges 1998, 2000, Elsrud, 2001, Maoz 2007, O’Reilly 2006, Sørensen 2003, White & White 2004). Similar to Desforges (1998, p.177), semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed the opportunity for a thorough interpretation of the “uses of travel in the lives of the interviewees” as well as “the complex nature of constructing identity.” Before describing in more detail how interviewing was used to collect the empirical material for this research, it is especially relevant to discuss my own background to the study, as my personal travel experiences both pre-empted and have had an ongoing influence on the research process.

4.4 Background of the researcher

My interest in lifestyle travellers stems from my own experiences of long-term travel. From 1999 to 2003, and again in 2005, I spent the majority of each year travelling, having visited Europe, Asia, Oceania and South America. My travel periods typically ranged from six to nine months, as after this length of time I tended to run out of money and would then turn to casual employment in the United States as a means of saving up funds for my next trip. Certainly, several years of travelling as a lifestyle have influenced my choice to research lifestyle travellers. Phillimore and Goodson (2004, p.4) have noted that a “researcher’s standpoint, values and biases – that is, their cultural background, ethnicity, age, class, gender, sexuality, and so on – play a role in shaping the researcher’s historical trajectory, and the way
in which they interpret phenomena and construct texts.” Indeed, not only have my travel experiences shaped the research project, but my background as a thirty-one year old, American white heterosexual male with an overseas postgraduate education has also influenced my choice of the research topic, the nature of the empirical material I collected and how the empirical material was interpreted.

My deep roots as a lifestyle traveller, however, have also given me extensive prior knowledge of the social world of lifestyle travel. While this means I may have unconsciously carried some biases into the research process, K. O’Reilly (2005, p.26) has suggested that “it is in fact impossible to start out with no preconceived ideas, no theories about how the world works.” K. O’Reilly (2005, p.26) went on to note that the best route towards inductive research is to “be open about one’s preconceptions, to read the literature and consider what theories have already been formed on a given topic, then to proceed in a manner which is informed but open to surprises.” Keeping this advice in mind, I have been open to emergent themes throughout the research process.

On the other hand, my familiarity with lifestyle travel has also given me valuable prior insights that should not be overlooked. Vail (2001) highlighted the value of previous experience in a social world by having suggested that one is able to make more effective use of collected empirical materials by referencing them to prior personal experiences. With my background in mind as an influence throughout the thesis, the chapter now turns to a description of with whom, where and how the research was carried out.

4.5 Inclusion criteria

The study’s empirical material consists of twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews with lifestyle travellers in northern India and southern Thailand that I conducted over three months from July through September 2007. Before detailing why India and Thailand were selected as sites for the study, this section examines the study’s inclusion criteria for identifying lifestyle travellers. As discussed in Section 3.4, there can be found a small proportion of travellers for which travel can no longer be considered a break or transition in their life span. For these individuals, repeated and extended temporal commitment to a travel lifestyle has become a way of life in itself that they intend to pursue indefinitely. Based on this understanding of a lifestyle traveller, the inclusion criteria for lifestyle travellers for this study were a fluid combination in which each interviewee self-defined travel as her/his lifestyle and had been on multiple trips of approximately six months or more.
Self-definition allowed each potential respondent to voice whether travel was perceived as her/his lifestyle, while multiple trips of approximately six months or more ensured that the individual had adopted the travel lifestyle for a significant life period. Self-definition alone was not sufficient in identifying lifestyle travellers as it has been suggested that individuals often lack clarity in recognising their own lifestyle (Veal 1993). Furthermore, a subjective interpretation of what constitutes a travel lifestyle by each potential respondent would have allowed for the unwanted inclusion of individuals that had spent little time travelling but nonetheless attested to travel as her/his lifestyle. Or as another example, the unsuitable inclusion of individuals that had long ago expatriated and had clearly stopped their external mobility, but yet still considered themselves as travellers.

A single minimum period of travel, such as the one-year used by Riley (1988) and Elsrud (2001) in their definitions of long-term travellers was deemed insufficient for conceptualising lifestyle travellers as it does not necessarily ensure that an individual who has travelled long-term has ceased travelling, had the opportunity to reflect on their travel experiences outside of the travel context and then decided to again travel long-term. Richards and Wilson (2003, p.5) have observed that “the return home is a time to reflect on the experience of the journey and what benefits it has produced.” Furthermore, in Wilson’s (2006) study of New Zealanders’ overseas experiences, she found that individuals who had returned home from travel had reflected on their travel experiences and were able to give complex answers on the reasons for their travels whereas individuals in the midst of their first extended trips were less sure of their motivations. On another level, Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) noted that for those for whom travel has become a preferred way of life, it is often the case that the individual serially returns to the travel lifestyle. Thus, the criterion of multiple trips not only ensured that individuals had repeatedly returned to the travel lifestyle, but also gave access to individuals who had likely reflected on the reasons for their travels outside of the travel context.

While somewhat arbitrary, the selection of approximately six months or more for the length of the individuals’ past and/or present trip(s) reflected Riley’s (1988, p.317) suggestion that a lengthy trip “requires most people to operate in the budget traveller (versus tourist) mode” and “provides adequate time for most people to confront identity issues on the road.” Moreover, Riley (1988) maintained that travellers who travel for one year or more are not necessarily significantly different from individuals who travel for six months on a budget. In each case, a lengthy trip allows for a flexible itinerary and lacks the restrictions typically aligned with a cyclical holiday (Riley 1988). In another example, Elsrud (2001), who defined
a long-term traveller as a person who is away from home for a year or more, included a number of individuals with journeys in the range of six to eight months.

Furthermore, from my own experiences as a lifestyle traveller, financial constraints can make a full year of travel difficult to repeat as most individuals must work to save money for their trips, which often causes repeat travelers to set-off for somewhat shorter durations. Finally, I have witnessed a significant portion of individuals who exist in a cycle between seasonal work in their own country and travel for the remainder of the year, qualifying these individuals as lifestyle travellers even though their length of travel is less than one year. Thus, fluid inclusion criteria of self-definition combined with multiple trips of approximately six months or more provided a logical set of parameters for identifying lifestyle travellers. However, while these criteria provided a necessary bounding of the corpus that was to be interviewed, the parameters were not applied exactly. Fluidity and flexibility was allowed for individuals who felt that they travelled as a lifestyle, yet did not rigidly meet the parameters of the study.

4.6 Why northern India and southern Thailand?

While lifestyle travellers are spread through many regions of the world, the time and funding limitations of the study required destinations with an established reputation for attracting experienced travellers. This was necessary to ensure convenient access over an intended three month fieldwork period to a significant number of lifestyle travellers. Northern India and southern Thailand offered fieldwork sites with established gathering points for conveniently accessing lifestyle travellers. Furthermore, flights returning to New Zealand from India typically allow a stop-over in Bangkok, which in this case allowed the fieldwork to be conducted in two promising locations using one international air ticket. As this research project is not implicitly bound to place but is instead focused on the role of the search for self among lifestyle travellers in general, research in more than one country allowed for access to a broader range of lifestyle travellers. The implications of conducting qualitative research with lifestyle travellers in India and Thailand are that the research is only directly representative of this specific context, although the findings can have meaning across other situations involving lifestyle travellers. (O’Reilly K. 2005).

Based on my personal experience of encountering a high number of lifestyle travellers in popular traveller gathering points in India during my first trip there in 2002, as well as literature that has conceptualised India as a destination for experienced travellers (Elsrud 2001, Richards & Wilson 2003), this country was selected as the first field site for the study.
Davidson (2005, p. 33) has noted that “India’s popularity as an important site of overland and budget travel reflects back on the way that it has been framed historically within tourist literature, cinema, photography, colonial and literary texts as a very symbolic space.” Indeed, travel to the ‘East’ in general has been framed in many Western minds as exotic and mystical (Hesse 1964), a discourse which has been captured in Said’s (1978) examination of the notion of Orientalism. In Sharpley and Sundaram’s (2005) discussion of ashram tourism in India, it was suggested that India’s pull as a spiritual destination (derived from a discourse of Orientalism) may induce some travellers to visit. 

Historically, India and Nepal was the end of the line for hundreds of thousands of young countercultural Westerners in the late 1960s and early 1970s travelling the overland hippie trail from Europe to the Indian subcontinent (MacLean 2006, Tomory 1996). With the discourse of lifestyle travel heavily based on this countercultural period, India has sustained a reputation as an ‘alternative’ lifestyle destination and his since attracted thousands of travellers (Tomory 1996). As for the tourism industry in India, they have aligned with this reputation for alternative lifestyle through the provisioning of tourist products in tourist enclaves manufactured around activities such as yoga and meditation (Sharpley & Sundaram 2005).

Richards and Wilson (2003) have suggested that the travellers who visit India tend to be more experienced as India has been represented as a ‘challenging’ travel destination. Richards and Wilson (2003, p.5) further noted that as individuals may gain a ‘thirst’ for travel, they may “expand their horizons by choosing increasingly challenging destinations, as they become more experienced travellers.” Moreover, Elsrud (2001, p.612) observed that “there is within the backpacker value-system a distinctly ‘strong story’ about India as a country making a traveler experienced, if not already experienced on arrival, as India is regarded as a particularly difficult country to travel in.” Thus, India has both been described in the literature and personally witnessed by myself as a destination that attracts lifestyle travellers.

Two other factors may lend to the appeal of India among lifestyle travellers. One, again based on my personal experience, is that India can be significantly cheaper to travel in than many other popular travel destinations in the world, as it is possible to exist ‘comfortably’ there on around ten USD per day (Mayhew et al. 2000). A final factor again is India’s reputation as a place for individuals seeking a form of spiritual experience (Noy & Cohen 2005, Sharpley & Sundaram 2005). Although India is perceived by many as “a sacred and spiritual place” (Maoz 2004, p.119), in Sharpely and Sundaram’s (2005) study of ashram travellers to India, it was found that relatively few of the respondents had travelled to India.
explicitly for spiritual reasons, but were instead there out of curiosity, a desire to learn yoga or just because India was on the tourist trail.

The selection of the northern part of India was based on seasonal climatic variations and the region’s tourist appeal. Davidson (2005) observed that the seasonal patterns characterising independent travel in India leads to many travellers congregating around India’s northern hill stations and mountain towns during its summer months. While most of the Indian subcontinent is affected by the monsoon during the months the fieldwork was undertaken (July to August), certain mountainous regions in the northern part of the country remain unaffected or experience a receding monsoon. Resultantly, travellers head to these regions during this time of year in hopes of clear Himalayan views (Mayhew et al. 2000). Hence, northern India held a high potential of providing access to lifestyle travellers when I commenced fieldwork there in July 2007.

As for the justification of Thailand as the second fieldwork site, on two previous trips to Thailand I had met a large number of lifestyle travellers there. Although Thailand has a more developed tourism industry and seems to attract a fuller gamut of tourists than India, Thailand also has a lengthy reputation as an attractive destination for lifestyle travellers, and like much of Asia, is entwined in Western minds with the notion of Orientalism (Said 1978). Indeed, like India, Thailand offers a range of pursuits that may attract lifestyle travellers, such as yoga, meditation and therapeutic massage, which provide discourses that Western individuals can mobilise in attempts to engage with Eastern worldviews of self and being. Additionally, popular Western culture, through books such as The Beach by Alex Garland (also made into a movie), has helped to draw travellers eastward by depicting Thailand as a seat of mystique, exoticism and escape, in which utopian ideals might be actualised.

Furthermore, Cohen’s (1982) research on bungalow tourism in southern Thailand helps to demonstrate the country’s history in attracting ‘drifters’. Westerhausen (2002) noted that relaxed island tourism in Thailand, particularly on the island of Koh Phangan, combined with increasingly rigid policing of travellers along the beaches of Goa in southern India, had resulted in a popularity shift among travellers from India to Thailand in recent years. For instance, on Bottle Beach in Koh Phangan, described in the Koh Phangan Guide (2009, n.p) as “one of the island’s most well-known beaches and a Mecca for long-termers and old skool Phangan aficionados,” I encountered a half dozen lifestyle travellers staying at one of the small budget beach resorts there on my first day in the southern islands. Finally, the timing for research in Thailand, which took place from mid-August through September 2007, coincided with non-monsoonal weather in the country’s south-eastern islands.
4.7 Procedures for interviewing

As indicated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, lifestyle travellers were accessed in several towns spread across northern India and on the islands of Koh Phangan and Koh Tao in southern Thailand. Within northern India, research was undertaken in and around the towns of Rishikesh, McLeod Ganj, Manali and Leh. The locations in northern India were selected because of their substantial reputations as popular destinations for travellers (Davidson 2005, Mayhew et al. 2000), whereas in the case of southern Thailand, I had the benefit of previous experiences of encountering lifestyle travellers in Koh Phangan and Koh Tao on prior trips. Each of these locations hold gathering places or traveller enclaves where travellers tend to congregate, often based on world-of-mouth or media representation (Vogt 1976, Wilson & Richards 2008a, 2008b).

Although Cohen (2004) has noted a supposed difficulty in locating and researching ‘contemporary drifters’ who may seek remote localities and avoid popular traveller enclaves, his assertion has not been based on empirical work, whereas my observations indicated that a significant number of lifestyle travellers do spend time in traveller enclaves. Indeed, traveller enclaves are important areas for social exchange and traveller facilities, as well having often gained their status as a gathering place as the result of their natural or built attractions that serve as tourist draw cards (Wilson & Richards 2008a, 2008b). A substantial number of lifestyle travellers, therefore, also visit the more popular gathering places along traveller circuits. For those lifestyle travellers who may choose to entirely avoid traveller gathering points and other travellers, these individuals may indeed have escaped the researcher’s reach.

My approach to interviewing the lifestyle travellers who did allow themselves to be ‘seen’, however, did not significantly differ between locations in India and Thailand. I entered the field as both a researcher and a traveller. Similar to Anderskov (2002), Riley (1988) and Sørensen (2003), I attempted to integrate myself with other travellers through dressing like them, socialising with them and moving through daily routines in the same networks of accommodation and eating facilities. I did not attempt to hide my role as researcher, as I was forthright about my project when asked about the details of my travel intentions.
Figure 4.1  Fieldwork sites in northern India

Source: Author

Figure 4.2  Fieldwork sites in southern Thailand

Source: Author
In fact, my identity as researcher was easily introduced into conversations with potential lifestyle travellers as the typical flow of conversation between two travellers meeting for the first time often turns to details concerning the length of time each individual intends to travel for and where they hope to go. This type of conversation allowed for me to smoothly introduce my research by commenting that I would leave the country as soon as I felt my research was complete. Such a line almost without fail sparked questions from the other party as to the topic of my research. Hence, I fielded these questions by briefly explicating my research project, which typically interested the potential respondents. Using this pattern of dialogue on most occasions, I was able to avoid approaching strangers ‘cold’ about my research and instead focused on meeting other travellers in a more ‘natural’ manner.

Identifying potential lifestyle travellers was often hit and miss. In general, backpackers of many levels of experience were easily identified by their presence in the cafes and accommodation facilities directed towards the backpacker market. Furthermore, these individuals were often identifiable by the way they dressed, a feature also pointed out by Elsrud (2001). Elsrud (2001) noted that backpackers in India tend to ‘dress down’, often wearing baggy clothing purchased in India. As such, while backpackers could be identified and approached, only following a preliminary conversation could I begin to determine whether the individual might meet the inclusion criteria for the study. It is recognised that this informal process used in the identification and meeting of respondents means that there may have been some limitations as to who was selected. Furthermore, it is likely that a degree of similarity existed between the researcher and the potential respondents (through dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and dress/appearance) that attracted them to each other in the first place.

Akin to Davidson (2005), Riley (1988) and Sørensen (2003), interviews were usually arranged by casually socialising at accommodation facilities, cafes and restaurants. In the case of southern Thailand, lifestyle travellers were also approached at small relatively inaccessible budget beach resorts where the guests often constituted a nearly captive audience. Rather than interviewing the respondents soon after we had first met, however, it was often several days until an interview with a potential respondent took place. In Westerhausen’s (2002) study of travellers, he reported that requests for interviews made shortly after meeting new individuals were often unsuccessful and sometimes caused suspicion. With this in mind, I often waited until I had built a reasonable rapport with the respondent before asking to sit down for an interview.

In many cases though, the potential respondent had openly self-defined her/himself as a lifestyle traveller and volunteered to be interviewed before I even asked. My own
experiences and appearance as a lifestyle traveller, combined with socialising with the respondent for several days before the interview, typically allowed for a degree of trust between the interviewee and myself and helped to reduce a researcher/respondent dichotomy. While in no cases was I refused a request for an interview forthright, there were a couple of times when the potential respondent moved on to another location before we had been able to set a time for an interview.

The interviews often took place in the same settings where I had first encountered the individuals, frequently over a meal or a drink, a procedure also used by Riley (1988). Often, interviewing one individual led to recommendations as to other lifestyle travellers in the area that I might interview, and in some cases, I was even directly introduced to new lifestyle travellers through this snowball effect. In these cases, a personal introduction by a friend of the prospective respondent afforded me an immediate degree of social credibility.

At the beginning of each interview, the respondent was given an information sheet outlining the study and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix A for information sheet for participants and Appendix B for consent form), as per the regulations of the University of Otago’s ethics committee. To guard against placing any of the respondents in a stressful position during the interview, each respondent was informed at the beginning of the interview of their right not to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time. As with the majority of interview-based research, the semi-structured in-depth interviews were digitally audio-recorded (Ticehurst & Veal 2000), enabling an accurate record of the interviews, allowing for the use of direct quotes and leaving me free to take limited handwritten notes and focus on observation of the participant rather than attempting to write down the interviewee’s entire responses (Saunders et al. 2000). The interviews ranged in length from forty-five minutes to two hours, with the majority of the interviews averaging about one hour.

As for the structure of the interviews, they were largely conversational and akin to Desforges (2000) study of the links between travel and identity, partly based on the tourism biography of the participant. As such, following the notation of basic demographics including age, gender, nationality and education level, the interviewees were often asked to begin by describing their travel experiences from childhood to the present. As each of the lifestyle travellers wove together a narrative of their travels, I at times questioned them as to the meanings they assigned to travel at different stages during their lives, why they travelled and the role of self in their travel experiences, as well as concurrently listening for emergent themes. Although I somewhat guided the interviews using a loose interview schedule indicative of the issues I aimed to cover at the outset of each interview (see Appendix C for
list of interview topics), the interviewees also largely guided the course of the conversations. As with the work of Sørensen (2003), many of the interviewees expressed a strong interest in the research, and towards the end of the interview, asked me about any preliminary findings. I often shared my preliminary findings with the inquiring individual, which in turn allowed for additional comments from the interviewee.

Many of the lifestyle travellers took long pauses within the interviews, during which they seemed to be intensely reflecting on the reasons behind their travels. Dann (1981, p.210) observed, however, that even though a respondent may have the willingness to reflect, the individual may not truthfully divulge the results of their reflections as they “may feel that the revelation is ego-threatening, constitutes an etiquette barrier, traumatic situation or loss of prestige before an interviewer.” Moreover, Saunders (2001, p.93) reminded:

> fieldwork is a personal endeavor, and its results depend on the connections we make in the field, on whether our respondents like us… respondents who don’t like us will be less likely to reveal details, biases, ambiguities, and uncertainties to us.

Nonetheless, the participants appeared to have made honest attempts to engage with the research topic. This claim was evidenced by the majority of the interviews having concluded with a warm handshake, a hug and/or words of gratitude from the respondent. Many of the lifestyle travellers voiced that they had found the interview to be a valuable thinking process, which they had enjoyed and possibly benefited from. As such, the relationships that had begun between myself and respondents when having met several days prior were often further solidified through the interview and continued to strengthen as travel friendships until we soon after went our separate ways. Before moving on to a description of the respondent demographics and how the empirical material was interpreted, it is important to discuss the main challenges that were encountered during the fieldwork process.

### 4.8 Respondent demographics

Demographics and further key characteristics of the individual respondents (including gender, age, nationality, education level, interview location, travel experience and travel style) are listed in Table 4.1. Of the twenty-five interviews, ten took place in northern India and fifteen were conducted in southern Thailand. More interviews were carried out in southern Thailand than in northern India due to the presence of a higher number of accessible lifestyle travellers in the former. In reference to the gender, age, nationality, education level and travel style of the respondents, there did not appear to be a significant difference between the demographics
of the individuals contacted in India versus Thailand. The majority of the interviewees were travelling alone, with the exception of four individuals who were travelling with their partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
<th>Travel experience (years)</th>
<th>Travel style*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Rishikesh</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Rishikesh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Rishikesh</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>High school drop-out</td>
<td>Rishikesh</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Israeli/French</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Manali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Manali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Canadian/Indian</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>McLeod Ganj</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>McLeod Ganj</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehud</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Israeli</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Leh</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Leh</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>High school drop-out</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steph</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Koh Phangan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Koh Tao</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Koh Tao</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Koh Tao</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Koh Tao</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Travel style
A=Rotates travelling with working overseas
B=Rotates travelling with working at home
C=Rotates travelling with both working overseas and working at home

Table 4.1 Key characteristics of individual respondents

In regards to the overall respondent group, fourteen of the respondents were male and eleven were female. Their ages ranged from twenty-three to fifty with the average age having been thirty years old. As for their education levels, there were a wide range with seven respondents with the highest level being a Masters degree, six with an undergraduate university degree, eight with a high school degree, two apprenticeships and two high school dropouts. Furthermore, the lifestyle travellers represented a wide range of nationalities as six were English, three each were Australians, Canadians and Israelis, two French and one each
of Irish, Scottish, American, Cuban, Swiss, German, New Zealander and Swedish. An over representation of Europeans and under representation of Americans corresponded with a nationality spread reported by Riley (1988) in her research of long-term travellers in South and Southeast Asia.

Finally, the lengths of time that each individual had travelled varied dramatically. Three of the respondents had each travelled the longest at approximately seventeen years, while the least travelled had been engaged in lifestyle travel for two and a half years. On average, however, the respondents had taken multiple trips in the range of six months to one year, with the majority having totalled around four years of on and off lifestyle travel.

4.9 Interpretation of the empirical material

Silverman and Marvasti (2008, p.53) have noted that in qualitative research “the writing and analysis are not separate, sequential stages, but they are intertwined and simultaneous.” Although K. O’Reilly (2005, p.177) has spoken of interpretation as tangled up in every stage of the research process, she has recognised that interpretation and writing-up are “distinct phases of the research process that are inextricably linked.” The notion of distinct yet interrelated phases to the collection of empirical material and interpretation is supported by Veal (2006), who has observed that the interpretation of qualitative material is difficult to separate from fieldwork in a temporal sense, yet certain activities, such as recording an interview and transcribing transcripts constitute distinctly different actions. Hence, while interpretation may be infused throughout much of a fieldwork period, this study has carried out both ongoing preliminary interpretations in the field as well as a more structured post-fieldwork interpretation of the empirical material.

As part of ongoing preliminary interpretations in the field, I kept a diary as record of my informal conversations, interviews and observations of the participants (Cole 2005). Handwritten notes during the interviews were later written-up in the diary. The diary included notes on the interviewees’ body language, facial expressions and a critical self-reflection of my role in the research process. Moreover, the preliminary interpretation included a description of the setting and atmosphere of each interview, details of the formation of the relationship between myself and the respondent and my feelings about what had been done, said and not said during each interview. As such, each subsequent interview was conducted in light of what the last respondent had said.

Jennings (2005, p.111) stated that a qualitative researcher should stop interviewing “when redundancy in regard to information is achieved.” Roughly during the last eight
interviews of the study, I began to feel that no new themes were emerging, but that instead the interviewees were repeating themes that had already been struck upon by earlier respondents. Hence, twenty-five interviews proved a sufficient number to reach redundancy, and upon returning to New Zealand, I commenced a formal interpretation of the empirical material. The first step in the formal interpretation was to allocate pseudonyms to the respondents and to personally transcribe the interviews. Transcribing the interviews myself provided me with a further familiarity with the transcripts. Following transcription, the transcripts and notes were read twice in their entirety, and following K. O’Reilly’s (2005, p.195) suggestion, I read through the empirical material “looking for startling facts, for themes or patterns, or for inconsistencies that need explaining.”

The empirical material was interpreted using a thematic analysis approach that consisted of searching for emergent themes (Patton 2002, Veal 2006). Veal (2006) has suggested that searching for emergent themes is a typical approach to the interpretation of qualitative materials, the effective equivalent of using variables in quantitative research. Veal (2006) further noted that themes normally arise through a combination of inductive or field-generated material and through deduction from the researcher’s conceptual framework, as was the case in this study. Certainly, as Jennings (2005) suggested, my prior familiarity with lifestyle travel allowed me to conduct the research with relatively specific and directed questions as to the role of the search for self in lifestyle travel, an inquiry influenced by both my own previous experiences and my reading of the relevant literature. Emergent themes were identified by first attempting to sort the empirical material into categories guided by the conceptualisation of the research and the interviewees’ narratives, a process that allowed for themes to surface (K. O’Reilly 2005, White & White 2004). From these themes were derived insights and subsequent interpretations as to the meanings that the lifestyle travellers attributed to their travels (Patton 2002).

4.10 Summary

This chapter began by setting out the methodological framework of the study. With the philosophical underpinnings of the thesis set within the paradigm of interpretivism, the research has followed a relativist ontology, an epistemological stance that knowledge is subjective and used qualitative guidelines as a methodological approach in attempting to understand the meanings and experiences of lifestyle travellers. As the thesis is concerned with the role of the search for self among individual lifestyle travellers, semi-structured in-depth interviewing was a clear choice as an appropriate method. Interviewing allowed for the
meanings held by each respondent to be individually voiced from the point of view of those studied.

Following an outline of the methodological framework and the method employed, I discussed my own background to the study, as my personal experiences as a lifestyle traveller and my social background have not only shaped my choice of the topic, but have influenced the entire research process, as well as having provided extensive prior knowledge of the social world of lifestyle travel. Next, the inclusion criteria for selecting interviewees were discussed, as a fluid combination in which each interviewee self-defined travel as her/his lifestyle and had been on multiple trips of approximately six months or more were justified as a set of parameters for identifying lifestyle travellers. The chapter then justified India and Thailand as the study’s fieldworks sites, based on each country’s history of attracting lifestyle travellers to established traveller gathering points.

The chapter then turned to the procedures that were undertaken during the interviewing process, including how and where I approached the lifestyle travellers, as well as how the interviews themselves were conducted and given a degree of structure. Lastly, the chapter discussed the demographics of the twenty-five respondents before describing how the empirical material was interpreted as an ongoing process, including both preliminary interpretations using the aid of a diary, as well as the later thematic interpretations based on the emergence of significant themes. Now that the conceptual basis for the study has been set in Chapters Two and Three, and following this chapter’s discussion of the methodology and method used, the focus of the thesis now turns to interpretations of the empirical material in Chapters Five and Six.
5.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to issues surrounding the search for self that influenced why the lifestyle travellers engaged in travel as a lifestyle. The chapter looks at the themes of escapism, freedom and learning through challenge, as the majority of the lifestyle travellers raised these themes as important reasons for why they travelled as a lifestyle. Since the respondents voiced several ways in which escapism, freedom and learning through challenge were related to the search for self, the chapter also explores how these themes are linked to self.

The next section discusses the role of escape for the lifestyle travellers as the respondents described escape from perceived anomic aspects of their home societies, the mundane of ‘everyday life’, the pressures of family and peer groups and failed aspects of their personal lives at home. Furthermore, the changing role of escapism over time for the respondents is explored. However, as notions of escape or ‘running away’ may carry negative connotations, the majority of the respondents instead focused on the importance of freedom to lifestyle travel. Thus, after the discussion of escape the chapter turns to the most commonly noted theme in the study, freedom.

The section on freedom describes the respondents’ perceptions of first finding freedom and how freedom may be experienced ‘on the road’. The discussion then turns to how the lifestyle travellers perceived increased free time and free space that was seen as conducive to moments of introspection or reflection, in which individuals attempted to address questions of self. Next, freedom is considered as a state of mind before giving voice to those respondents that questioned the promise of freedom through travel.

Lastly, the chapter explores the theme of learning through challenge, as a significant number of the lifestyle travellers linked freedom and travel to an ability to learn about the world and engage in challenging situations that allowed for a sense of self-testing. Thus, after the sections on escape and freedom, the lifestyle travellers’ views on travel as a process of learning about the world and the importance of challenging moments in the travel experience are discussed. Finally, the chapter examines the role of flow experience as a possible motivating factor for the lifestyle travellers.
5.2 Escapism

In support of the modern tourism literature that posited the need to escape as a motive for why some individuals go on holiday (Crompton 1979, Dann 1977), many of the interviewees in this study felt that escapism played a significant role in why they decided to first go travelling, and for some, why they continued to travel. As Thomas (English, 29) summarised: “For me it was escapism at the beginning, purely and utterly escapism.” Or as Steph (Australian, 23) remarked towards the close of two consecutive years away from Australia: “When I left, I left because I was running away from home and I didn’t like where I was and what I was doing with my life.” While respondents depicted escape from their home societies in general, a number of specific areas within the societal context were raised from which the individuals would seek to escape, including routine, family, peers and other personal and interpersonal problems.

Also, in further justification of leisure and tourism as a two-fold process of avoidance and seeking (Iso-Ahola 1982), it was directly noted by a few of the respondents that it was necessary to escape in order to be able to search for self. Hence, getting to know one’s self was conceptualised as a process that can take place more easily outside of one’s home society. As Charlotte (Canadian, 26), volunteered on escapism when asked to expand on the role of searching for self in her travels: “It’s escapism and it’s getting to know yourself. You kind of have to escape your current reality to gain perspective on it, and I think that’s why I left Canada to begin with.” Escaping one’s current reality reportedly allowed for engagement in alternative realities that offered different ways of perceiving one’s self. Simon (Swiss, 50) also commented on the importance of escape in order to have time with one’s self, especially early on in one’s travels: “Yeah, you just have to break out, run away of the system actually, at the beginning. It’s just to find more our self, have more time with our self, that’s all we need to find our freedom inside us.” Thus, some of the respondents provided support for Cohen and Taylor’s (1992) assertion that escape attempts are underpinned by the search for one’s perceived true self.

5.2.1 Escaping a perceived anomie in their home societies

The majority of the lifestyle travellers who spoke of escape did not directly link escapism to a search for self, but instead focused on the need to escape perceived negative aspects of Western society. Being that Maoz (2004) noted that estrangement from one’s home society was a less central theme to most modern backpackers, the finding that lifestyle
travellers largely felt estranged from their home societies lends further justification to lifestyle travellers as different from the backpacking ‘norm’. Markedly, while the lifestyle travellers interviewed spanned thirteen nationalities, much common ground for complaint against Western society was voiced. This was despite the interviewees also having represented a diverse age range and educational background, as detailed in Section 4.8. However, one notable point of demographic convergence was that the interviewees represented a highly mobile, mainly white and Western grouping, which arguably gave them a common perspective from which to angle their discontent. Although, this may be more of a dominant description for having the means to travel long-term, as opposed to being a value or attitude determining factor.

A more likely explanation for the common complaints about ‘mainstream’ society was that their values and attitudes towards the subject have been influenced by the cultural context of the travel lifestyle, where a discourse of resistance, utopianism and ‘the romantic outsider’ (Cohen & Taylor 1992, p.215) has filtered down from 1960’s counterculture, and before that, from the transcendentalists of the Romantic period for whom a perceived conflict with society directed the search for fulfillment ‘outside’ of the mainstream social order (Baumeister 1986). Max (English, 40) described how lines can be drawn between a dominant order society and those who resist or rebel against it:

> It’s like a certain amount of anarchy, you almost have to frame a bit of anarchy around you, that’s what it seems to me, you have to do this to live within this fucking high order society that you’re actually trying to escape from in the first place. You have to kick out against it and rebel, just to find your own little niche.

Max believed his niche had been found through lifestyle travel.

Riley’s (1988, p.325) travellers “almost all indicated a greater awareness of the waste in the developed world, disdain for materialism, and a desire to live a more simple, unencumbered life.” Strikingly similar, the lifestyle travellers in this thesis noted value differences with ‘Western society’ over the importance of ‘naturalness’, materiality, money and the drive to succeed. Julie (German, 27) described how she no longer identified with what she perceived as the dominant German lifestyle: “When I was three weeks at home it was horrible, absolutely horrible, because everything’s inside. Everyone is trying to be the best in everything, it’s terrible, and it’s all about money.” Thus, it appeared that for Julie and many other lifestyle travellers mainstream Western society was perceived as anomic, as was also evidenced in Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2000) work with long-term travellers in which pessimistic perceptions of capitalistic Western lifestyles were common. Moreover, just as
Macbeth (2000) found that the ocean cruising lifestyle articulated a social critique of mainstream society, lifestyle travellers often spoke in a similar critical manner.

It is likely that the experience of returning home and being dissatisfied with what one finds can act as a driving force in pushing travellers back out again on to the road. As evidenced below, it is also possible that the relationship between the lifestyle traveller and her/his home society increasingly deteriorates over time as the individual feels progressively more alienated and experiences a widening value gap. Having noted that both those who have travelled and those left behind have changed during the course of one’s travels, Jackie (English, 26) highlighted the repercussions of being away for an extended period of time:

In some ways, I think if you’re honest with yourself, when you’ve travelled a long time you can’t go home and just fit back into your life. The people who you left behind have moved on. In two years, everything has completely changed. I’ve changed and my friends and family, everyone has moved on.

Jackie stressed a growing incompatibility that a traveller may feel with her/his home society, right down to the family unit. These results reflected Wilson’s (2006, p.132) work with the overseas experiences of New Zealanders in which some travellers found adjusting difficult upon returning home as “the reality for many was that they did not fit in at ‘home’ any longer.”

On the other hand, some respondents had experienced decreasing levels of animosity towards home as their travel experience had increased.

I couldn’t for a while settle back in at all into the normal routine life in Dublin. I was hypercritical about everything back home. I saw things differently and I was very, very critical of the way things went on. That’s mellowed out completely now. I think after subsequent trips I kind of appreciate things about home more (Brendon, Irish, 26).

Hence, the more Brendon travelled, the more he eventually appreciated his home society. This divergence of views seemed to represent a variance in the intensity of resistance one held towards mainstream society, and as such, may have played a role in determining whether the individual continued lifestyle travel or elected to cease their travels and return home.

5.2.2 Escaping the mundane of ‘everyday life’

Within the lives of their peers and families at home, it largely appeared that the lifestyle travellers found falling into routine to have been the main danger associated with leading a
‘stable’ life in their own society. This was consistent with Crompton’s (1979, p.416) claim that that the desire to “escape from a perceived mundane environment,” or in other words, routine, formed one of the major motives driving vacation behaviour. Fiona (23, New Zealander) recalled her disappointment in returning to the mundane in New Zealand after her first long trip away: “There was just so much routine, it was just all the same and people didn’t seem to be going anywhere, everyone just in a rut. I didn’t want to be, I didn’t want to be.”

Many respondents felt trapped by their home society and attempted to escape it by physically moving outside the boundaries of it. Thus, escapism as a push factor seemed to have predisposed some of the respondents to travel (Crompton 1979, Dann 1977). Julie (German, 27) had said of her life back in Germany prior to travel - “I felt like a bird in a cage.” Respondents commonly felt negatively towards falling into ‘routine life’. Antithetically, the ability to construct and lead a dynamic life was highly valued by the interviewees. Several lifestyle travellers, such as Max (English, 40) described returning home after long swathes of time away to find that in their estimation, virtually nothing had changed:

> When you get back and your friends or your workmates or whatever, they’re still going down to the pub on that Tuesday night, they’re still doing the same things; the whole routine has remained the same. And you’ve had a whole year out and it’s like you just travelled in fucking space or something and come back and it’s just the next day.

Whether an individual that travels leads a more dynamic life than someone who stays at home is of course situationalised and up for debate. Nonetheless, respondents that had become used to a ‘dynamic life’ on the road often experienced a degree of reverse culture shock upon returning home. This may have reinforced the travellers’ perception of a need to escape. Reverse culture shock stemmed not just from the belief that nothing had changed at home, but also from the experience of value conflict with some of the dominant values in the travellers’ home societies. Riley (1988, p.325) had also found in her interviews with travellers that “returning home after a year or more of traveling requires adjustments” as there was a significant contrast between travelling and the “regimentation of daily home life.” Some of the respondents believed that Western society was pushing them towards and deceiving them into a lifestyle they did not want. When Thomas (English, 29) was asked to expand on why he had not been happy in England he responded:
I’ve never fit in too well with Western culture to be honest. Like, I don’t like the whole go to work, consume, be silent, die thing. It’s just not for me. Even when I was young I used to think I was being miss-sold a dream in a way. And even when I was thirteen I thought, hang on a minute, I love roaming around the hills and swimming in the sea, I don’t want any of this stuff they’re trying to sell me. And like England is such a strong place for that, like the States. Travelling made me realise, hang on, this is optional, you don’t have to do this.

Here, Thomas felt pressured into a certain way of life by mainstream society that did not agree with his vision of how life should have been for him. As such, he has tried to escape Western society indefinitely and planned to live and travel in Asia for as long as his means allowed him. This represented a general discontent with the structuring of his home society; however, there was also a more specific area of contention with work/leisure balances.

A general dissatisfaction with the idea of fulltime work and other ‘adult responsibilities’ pervaded many of the interviews. As Brendon (Irish, 26) commented on why he travelled as a lifestyle: “Escapism is definitely a huge part of it. Adult responsibilities seem a million miles away and you’re not thinking about rent, it’s definitely to escape.” For these lifestyle travellers, Riley’s (1988) observation that travellers were seeking to delay ‘adult responsibilities’ was partially confirmed. Although, as in the case of Thomas, rather than delay entry into work and other responsibilities, some of the lifestyle travellers intended to forgo these ‘burdens’ entirely. In many cases, avoidance of work or the alleged responsibilities of being an adult was liable to cause tension between those individuals who attempted to escape and their family and peers who might have held different expectations for them. Consequently, a major theme underlying the described escape attempts was the need to break away from the pressures of family and peers.

5.2.3 Escaping the pressures of family and peer groups

Respondents described feeling ‘boxed in’ by the expectations of their family and peers. This included not only expectations to work and pursue adult responsibilities such as raising a family, but also to act, behave and/or even dress in a certain manner. When generally asked what she liked about travel, Jackie (English, 26) had focused on the anonymity that travel allowed:

When you’re at home, there’s always pressure from the people around you and the people that know you who expect you to do a certain thing. But when nobody knows you, they don’t expect you to act in a certain way. I suppose it’s the freedom of being anonymous.
Here, travel afforded Jackie the opportunity to break out from previous patterns of behaviour, a process which may have been more difficult when spatially under the thumb of familiar social expectation. Only once physically separated from the home environment did Jackie feel freer from these social pressures. However, for one respondent, familial expectations were not an issue and this was largely attributed to class.

Because I am from a really rough family that didn’t really have any expectations of me, I’ve never had that experience of needing to rail against anything, because there weren’t really any expectations to rail against. So for me, I’ve always been able to forge my own path from a very young age. I know the phenomenon, like often if someone comes from a kind of white, middle class family and it has certain expectations that when you grow up you’re going to do X, Y, and Z, that person will travel to rail against those expectations (Kat, Australian, 30).

Some individuals who experienced pressure from family and peers found that the anxiety did not end when the individual physically relocated her/himself. Interviewees reported feeling pressured to use their time on the road to decide what they would do for the rest of their lives. As such, family and peers could put an imaginary timer on one’s travels, and in some cases, individuals may have even self-imposed this pressure, such as in Steph’s (Australian, 23) case:

I felt a little bit of pressure from the family, not that they ever went out and said that you have to become something or that you have to have a role in life or whatever, but I kind of felt pressure. But maybe I put it upon my own self, to discover who I am and what I was going to do with the rest of my life once I got over the travel bug or whatever. But I haven’t, and I don’t care anymore.

Steph had felt both pressures from her parents and from her own self to make major life decisions during her travels.

Another viewpoint given by Thomas (English, 29) was bracketed by age, which suggested that the difference between parents’ expectations and the lives of some of the respondents was symptomatic of a budding generational conflict:

It’s different because obviously we’re influenced by our parents too, right, and in our parents’ day a job was something to treasure, you had a good job and career and all that, you wouldn’t throw it away. But, it’s not that way anymore. We can afford to be more frivolous with things like that so there’s definitely that conflict of generations I guess that a lot of people suffer, like their family expecting them to settle down and whatever.
Whether the impetus to settle into full-time work at home came from one’s family and peers or from a drive that the individual felt they self-imposed, in both instances the pressure was influenced by the socially constructed design that after school or university one ought to find a career and ‘make something of them self’. Rebelling against the idea embodied an attempt at resistance to this ‘normative’ pattern of behaviour. An additional prominent theme raised by a few of the lifestyle travellers, which reflected Iso-Ahola’s (1982) suggestion that individuals may try to escape personal problems and failures, was the need to escape specific personal troubles, often having stemmed from failed relationships.

5.2.4 Escaping personal problems

Several respondents described personal problems that pushed them to travel, as noted by Maoz (2007) who suggested that some individuals have experienced ‘life crises’ prior to their journeys. Charlotte (Canadian, 26) summed up travel as a perceived escape from one’s reality of self: “In a lot of ways, I think it’s an escape; that you want to escape the present reality that you’ve created for your self.” Hence, these respondents provided support for Baumeister’s (1991) observation that some individuals may try to escape from their current constructions of self. Issues related to escaping personal problems ranged through failed relationships with partners, depression at home, personal troubles from the divorce of parents and the running away from both their own heavy drug usage and the social milieu that may have fomented it. The most common problem among these respondents had been escaping due to a relationship break-up:

I think I had associated India with a positive change in me, and for the last year or so there were crazy things happening and then a few months ago I was living with my girlfriend, broke up with my girlfriend, moved out, so I just kind of felt like it would be good to get away for a while, clear my head in a new context, so India just occurred to me, seemed like a good place to go (Brendon, Irish, 26).

Brendon had not only returned to India for a second long trip because he had wished to rekindle the positive self-changes that he had perceived from his first trip, but he also hoped that the space away from home that India provided would be more conducive to getting over his break-up. The concept of space on both an external physical and internal level was an important theme that is expounded upon in Section 5.3.3. The usefulness of the travel context as opposed to the home environment in dealing with one’s problems did not seem to be a phenomenon relegated exclusively to young adults. Even the study’s oldest respondent
related, “I actually separated sort of with my wife four years ago, that’s why I’m start travelling again. Easy to get over it” (Simon, Swiss, 50).

In some cases, the travel context was used to escape general depression or existential melancholy in the home environment, as described by Marie (French, 26): “I just didn’t feel good in Paris and in France, it was very hard, and I had a lot of questions. I just didn’t fit with my people there.” In a best-case scenario, travel may have even afforded a perceived panacea for one’s general ills – “When I left home I was an angry soul and everything was awful and painful and annoying and dark, and now everything’s great, everything’s beautiful” (Steph, Australian, 23). Travel was also used to escape aspects of one’s own life, such as drug usage. As Ehud (Israeli, 34) commented: “After I lost a lot of money and used a lot of drugs, I really felt my life was in a landslide, so I went back to India for the third time. India really took care of me.” In this instance, the travel context served not only as an area conducive to escape, but almost as a nurturer or a therapist.

5.2.5 The changing role of escapism

It would be inaccurate to portray the majority of the respondents in this study as dedicated escapees. Approximately half of the lifestyle travellers directly identified escape as a factor as to why they had travelled as a lifestyle, and within this number, several pointed out that escape was no longer needed. For instance, having volunteered that travel had been by no means an escape for her, Tracey (English, 31) declared, “I’ve never been kind of desperate just to ditch everything and jump on the next plane. I’ve never seen it as a big escape. I have a perfectly fine time at home.” Notably, Tracey’s involvement in the travel lifestyle was significantly lower than many of the respondents, which suggested a positive relationship between level of engagement in the travel lifestyle and perceived alienation from one’s home society.

Additionally, several of the interviewees identified escape as having played a lessening role in their travels over time. Indeed, Ryan (1997a) pointed out that holidays may be periods of escape for some individuals at certain times. As Julie (German, 27), who intended to keep travelling indefinitely, attested when asked if her motivation for travel had changed over time: “Now I don’t have to escape anymore. The first travelling was just an escape. But now I have such a nice life.” These words reflected Macbeth’s (2000, p.23) observation in the ocean cruising lifestyle that push factors, such as escape, are more important in the earlier months of the experience while pull factors, which “involve a search and the creation of a
lifestyle alternative,” start to dominate as one accumulates experience. Moreover, Kat (Australian, 30) pointed out when asked of the current role of escapism in her travels:

I don’t think escapism is as important now because I’ve done enough trips that I don’t really have anything I need to escape from anymore. There’s still an element of escapism but much less so now because as I’ve gotten older it’s much easier to place boundaries on that stuff.

Kat’s words spoke of a relationship between an individual’s lifestage and its relation to travel experiences, a topic that is explored in Section 6.7 under the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers. On a different note, through having continued to travel after escape had lost much of its relevance, these lifestyle travellers have also questioned the notion of escape’s centrality to tourism motivation concepts.

While many of the lifestyle travellers did not mention escape as part of why they have travelled as a lifestyle, it was highly likely that escape may have played a role for some of these individuals even though they did not elect to discuss it. The idea of escaping can hold negative connotations and as such, some travellers may have been working with a degree of denial. Moreover, as motives can be multi-dimensional, conflicting and changing over time (Ryan 1997a, Ryan 1997b), for those for which escape was relevant, escapism should be considered as one theme of several that may have been working in tandem with other needs and desires. This was further evidenced by many respondents who did not mention escape having instead spoken in depth about how seeking ‘freedom’, the next theme in this chapter, played a primary role in why they travelled as a lifestyle. As based on Iso-Ahola’s (1982) conceptualisation of leisure as a two-fold process involving both avoidance and seeking, in order to escape from something, one must escape to something, whether literally or figuratively; and freedom is inseparable from this notion.

5.3 Perceiving freedom

Among the themes that emerged out of the interviews, freedom was the most commonly cited factor as to why the individuals travelled as a lifestyle, which reflected Riley’s (1988) observation that tourism is both escape (push) and pursuit (pull), with the experience of freedom as a pull factor. Indeed, it seemed that akin to Anderskov (2002), who found freedom to be the most important value in backpacker culture, lifestyle travellers also cherished freedom above all. While many of the respondents had first set out travelling because of curiosity and the desire for discovery, fun, adventure and the novel, several of the
interviewees described being struck by the freedom they had found whilst travelling. For instance, when asked the main reasons for why he travelled, Max (English, 40) declared: “It’s the curiosity, it’s the exploration, but it’s probably freedom, very strongly the freedom that you’re looking for when you travel, when you get away.” In contrast to the need for escape, many of the respondents did not consciously seek freedom through travel prior to their going away, but only appreciated it as a critical attractor of the travel lifestyle once on the road.

Most of the participants felt that lifestyle travel afforded a higher degree of freedom than was to be found in their home societies. Like escapism, many of the respondents also stressed freedom from obligations in their home societies such as consumerism, their families and peer groups. Furthermore, the experience of feeling freedom was described as critical to the search to for self as freedom was conceived of as a baseline requirement in ‘freeing’ up individuals to perceive learning about the self. Learning about the self was depicted as taking place when individuals experienced increased free space and free time. This time and space was depicted as allowing for the necessary ‘elbow room’ from their home societies in which to search for self. Again, the importance of freedom to the lifestyle travellers spoke of a vocabulary of Romanticism among the respondents, as during the Romantic period the notion of freedom had been touted as a precursor in discovering one’s ‘true self’ (Beedie 2007, Jamieson 1996).

Also, a few of the respondents conceptualised freedom as a state of mind that could be achieved outside of external factors. In this sense, these participants had attempted to dislocate freedom from place. Freedom as a state of mind was further reflected by respondents that perceived a changing role for freedom in the course of their travels. For this minority of the lifestyle travellers, freedom had become less important throughout the course of their travels as they attested to being able to experience freedom in all aspects of their lives, as opposed to just previously in the travel context. Lastly, in contrast to most of the interviewees, a minority of the respondents expressed a certain degree of cynicism towards the idea of freedom through travel, and as such, had attributed the finding of freedom through travel varying levels of importance. For these individuals, consumerism had drained travel of any remaining avenues through which to experience a feeling of ‘absolute freedom’. Yet, the majority of the lifestyle travellers did not feel this way and instead viewed travel as a road to freedom.
5.3.1 First finding freedom

Respondents commonly claimed that they did not seek freedom prior to their travels, but only discovered it once they found themselves in the travel context. Lifestyle travellers varied as to the factors that originally underpinned their respective desires to travel, but often cited a longing to see other ways of living, learning about the world and searching for fun and adventure. While some did recognise that they were looking for increased independence, many were not consciously looking for freedom but found it as part of the package that travel entailed. In his discussion of the differences he perceived between Scotland and his travel lifestyle, Alec (Scottish, 34) volunteered freedom’s role in his travels:

For me, I was just really interested to see other cultures and experience different climates and landscapes on the earth, you know, jungles, the mountains, the beaches, the seas. And freedom, I suppose that’s sort of come along with the travelling just because I’ve experienced greater freedom than I would have experienced back home.

Rather than having sought out freedom directly, Alec discovered a sense of freedom once engaged in the travel lifestyle. The sudden experience of increased freedom could be quite substantial, as it was for Tamara (Canadian/Indian 34):

First to India, that was the first time that, like I did the travel. By myself, through Europe, and then to India. And that’s when I was really like – wow, this is free, I like this freedom. And that feeling was something that, for me, I knew, was good for me and was important that I continued to explore.

In Tamara’s case, the experience of finding freedom when first setting out travelling had played an important role in driving her to travel for most of the last seventeen years.

For a few others, the experience of finding freedom was anticipated and sought after. Such as for Eric (French, 35), for whom finding freedom through travel was a conscious endeavour: “I look for freedom, sure. This is what is the most important for me in my life, it’s freedom.” Just as the budding lifestyle travellers varied as to whether they expected to feel freer during their travels or were awestruck by the discovery of increased independence, the respondents volunteered different notions of what kind of freedom they had perceived through travel.
5.3.2 Freedom on the road

Tamara (Canadian/Indian, 34) believed everyone is meant to be free and saw travel as a means of opening up a road to self-development: “Free to move, free to speak, free to talk, free to learn, you know, free to engage, just free to be.” Similar thoughts were shared by Thomas (English, 29) who stated:

Freedom for me is very simply a case of doing what I want to do. Everything I do, I do because I want to, which is how life should be for everyone. Everybody’s different in what they want out of their life is different from the next guy, but attaining it is all that matters, or trying to at least.

Thomas’s perspective on freedom again spoke of a narrative of striving for uniqueness and the development of one’s full potential (Baumeister 1986, Maslow 1971).

Participants described having relished the freedom to structure each day while travelling as they had pleased. To them, life on the road had presented fewer obligations than life in their home societies, as noted here by Alec (Scottish, 34) as he had reflected on his engagement in the travel lifestyle since his late teens: “If you’re on the open road, there’s just that sense of freedom. In the travel lifestyle, you don’t have bills coming through the door, but just generally you’re free to go and do what you want.” Alec’s words resonated with the etymological roots of the word ‘leisure’ as derived from the Latin for ‘to be permitted’ (Turner 1977). Hence, with most of the lifestyle travellers having perceived their travels as free or intrinsically motivated, two aspects which have defined traditional definitions of leisure (Mannell, Zuzanek & Larson 1988), it could be argued that lifestyle travel for these individuals has constituted a leisure lifestyle.

Also having perceived fewer restrictions while travelling than in their home societies, other lifestyle travellers, such as Laura (Canadian, 28), felt freer and less restrained by bills, rules, regulations, taxes and laws in the travel lifestyle:

I just feel completely different when I’m in Canada. I just feel more free, that sounds so cheesy, when I’m travelling. Like I can just pick up and do whatever I want. I have no obligations when I’m travelling other than my travel dates and when I have to catch a flight and stuff.

Without a firm sense of obligation, interviewees described a freedom of action with near nil accountability – “Travel affords me the opportunity to do whatever I want, without having to justify that or being accountable to anyone” (Ryan, Australian, 48). Thus, some of the respondents resembled Richards and Wilson’s (2004) description of the nomad as an idealised
form of travel where travel could be perceived as liberation from the constraints of modern society.

This being said, the lifestyle travellers had by no means entered a space where there were no actual restrictions. For example, many travellers use drugs heavily in Thailand, even though one risks a long jail sentence if caught. With the rules and restrictions of a country often ignored, there seemed to be a consensus within the traveller lifestyle that restrictions should not be commonly mentioned, and that one was free to do as they wished. Yet rather than being a liminoid space of antistructure or total freedom (Lett 1983, Turner 1977), as is discussed in Section 5.3.5, these lifestyle travellers were more accurately in a liminoid place wherein they were relatively constrained by their own cultural assumptions, a shared travel culture and the commodification of the travel industry.

The lifestyle travellers portrayed freedom from all of the aspects of their home societies by which they had felt constrained and had been seeking escape, including economic pressures, materiality, mundane day to day life, and the expectations of family and peer groups. In his discussion of freedom in the travel lifestyle, Brendon (Irish, 26) related similar views to White and White’s (2004) suggestion that travel also offers increased freedom in social engagement:

> It’s freedom from routine, it’s freedom from economic imperative. Freedom also on who you are and how you interact. You don’t have the accumulated expectations that people have of you or you don’t get the histories that people have. Freedom in terms of, as well, that you can do nothing all day if you want to. You can actualise your decisions really easily when you’re travelling.

Notably, while many of the interviewees, such as Brendon, stressed a freedom from economic constraints, most of the lifestyle travellers were forced to return to their home countries each year to work for several months in order to finance their next trips. Often, this work took the form of a job that the travellers lamented as constrictive and unrewarding. In this sense, while lifestyle travel may lay claims to freedom, in many cases it represented a seasonal trade-off between perceived freedom and reluctant dependence on the society the lifestyle travellers had aimed to escape. Thus, while travel may have allowed for a sense of relief from obligation, for the majority this relief was not permanent. It is this economic fragility and cyclical instability that makes lifestyle travel unsustainable for many of its participants, as is discussed in further depth in Section 6.7.

Moreover, a strong ethic of antimaterialism, which runs deeply through lifestyle travel and largely rests on the belief that one needs nothing more than the contents of a backpack, may have helped some of the lifestyle travellers to have perceived themselves as freer from...
Western consumerism. Alternatively, it can be suggested that while the lifestyle travellers do somewhat escape the cycle of working in order to buy tangible goods, they are instead imprisoned by the need to purchase experiences. When asked if travel allowed for freedom from consumerism, Thomas (English 29) responded: “This is modern materialism, we’re sold this dream and we buy into it. Experience things and see new things. But linking it with freedom, if you’ve got a free mind, you’re not bound by anything.” Having taken an idealistic approach, Thomas was happy to overlook the commodification of experience in the travel context and instead viewed traveller infrastructure as accessible comfort that he might choose to utilise.

5.3.3 More space and time to reflect

Perceived freedom through travel from the obligations of economic pressures, consumerism, restrictions, routine, peer groups, family and work led many of the lifestyle travellers to describe a feeling of increased space and time for their selves. Davidson (2005) reported similar results in having found that many travellers viewed travel as a route to finding space outside of perceived economic, social and political contradictions in their home societies. In many cases, this newfound ‘free time’ and ‘free space’ allowed a chance for reflection on one’s self that the individual may have not previously undertaken in their home society.

This finding was consistent with Elsrud’s (2001) work with travellers in which a timespace away from home relieved them from previous pressures on self and supplied the requisite for the creation of a new or perceived truer sense of self. Anna (English 25) noted how she used travel as a ‘time-out’ so as to reflect on her self: “A nice thing about travel for me is that I can reflect on my self and learn in that kind of a reflective way about what the past year, for example, has done for me or what I want after next year, you know, it’s that kind of time-out.” While not everyone who perceived greater free time and space were directed towards introspection, Alec (Scottish, 34) suggested it was ‘natural’ to fall into a line of self-questioning in the travel context. In contrast to the intense work week he considered as typical in Western society, he noted how lifestyle travel provided more free space and time, which resulted in a silence that often led individuals to inner inquiry:
I would say that given enough time and space and a bit of silence, we naturally feel there is something greater. And I think that’s maybe why a lot of travellers have that experience. Maybe having moments of reflection and inner inquiry leads you to some sort of feeling. Maybe that’s one aspect of why travellers have that, just purely from that we have time and freedom to allow that experience to happen. Not necessarily saying it happens for everybody of course, but there’s a lot more opportunity and potential for those people to even inquire into those things and possibly have some kind of understanding or experience or something, some shift inside just because they have the chance to. Back home people working 40, 45, 50 hours a week, they just don’t have the time and space for it, or the silence.

Indeed, silence from the ‘noise’ of Western society in order to observe one’s self pervaded several of the responses.

However, it seemed that self-reflection was not a continuous stream of consciousness for the respondents. Rather than having reflected on his self continuously, Brendon (Irish, 26), when having discussed getting to know his self through travel, described how introspection had taken place intermittently:

It’s kind of like checking up on yourself at certain stages. I think it’s hard to continuously keep in touch with yourself, you’ll get distracted at stages, but you can check up and go, ok, I’m here now, this is what I’m at, this is what I’m like. Yeah, travelling is good for getting in touch with yourself, taking stock.

Hence, for Brendon, perceived self-development through travel acted like a track that he could leave and return to at different times.

It appeared that the key aspect of increased space and time for the respondents was a perception that they had escaped the familiar. Indeed, some of Crompton’s (1979, p.417) respondents “stressed that exposure to a different milieu for a period of time served as a reference point for re-evaluation of their own life style.” Tamara (Canadian/Indian, 34) suggested that increased space and time away from the familiar was necessary in order to meet one’s self: “Travelling gives you freedom of space and time to even meet the self, right, because you’re completely out of anything familiar.” Physical movement away from the respondents’ home societies allowed for a feeling of newfound space. In contrast, the confines of one’s home society was often viewed as limiting, as Barry (English, 32) had complained of his home town in England: “I live in a relatively small city, I can walk into one pub in the centre of town at any time of any day and I will know at least one person in there.” For Barry, he felt that already being known by others was a hindrance. Moreover, Fiona (New Zealander, 23) noted how lifestyle travel had allowed her space away from the prior expectations of her family and peers, even in regards to her ways of dressing:
That was part of it, to have space to get clarity about what I want to do. You know, when no one has expectations of you and what you are and what you should be, as at home, you are often in a box, and people know you and expect certain things from you. Certain ways of being, of dressing, of everything.

Being spatially away from family and one’s peer group, so as to be alone, was described as a valuable process by some of the respondents. As Ryan (Australian, 48) related: “I like being alone; that’s one of the reasons I travel. I love being alone, fish in a big pond. Travel, particularly travel alone, affords me that.” In addition to physical space away from their home societies, a number of respondents focused on the value of increased free time.

Eric (French, 35) described how not having to work every day had given him his ‘own time’. Rather than being lazy, he cautioned that his choice was an arduous one as so much spare time would inevitably lead him to existential questioning:

I have some money, not so much, but for the moment, I don’t have to work a lot. I don’t have to work every day. What is different, you know? You get time. You get your own time. For some people, I do one of the hardest jobs in the world. Making nothing. Doing nothing. It’s one of the hardest jobs. So many people cannot do nothing during the day. Because they are afraid to be in front of them. When you have nothing to do you are in front of you. So the questions start about your self. Who am I? What is the life? Why am I here? What can I do?

Eric clearly portrayed how increased free time could be challenging as it leads towards introspection.

Other lifestyle travellers described how occupied time at home might not only have kept an individual too busy to have engaged in self-questioning, but could also be a time when the ideas of others were oppressive. Jackie (English, 26) depicted how her involvement in institutions such as the army and university had seemingly prevented her from formulating her own thoughts:

I sort of realised that everything I think is what school or my parents have told me to think, and I think when you go and do something like that [travel] you spend a lot of time thinking for your self and you realise you want to make your own opinions. I’ve been a prime example. I’ve been in permanent education, university and institutes such as the army since I was five, so I didn’t really have any thoughts that were my own.

Jackie went on to relate how structured life at home is too routinised for most to regularly question their role in the world:
When you’re at home you never really question that, like, you know that you’re meant to go to work, and you’re meant to wash the car on the weekend, and you’re meant to cut your grass. But when you’re travelling, it becomes something different, doesn’t it? You’re like, what am I actually here for? I suppose that’s your purpose really. And you try to find that.

Having perceived free time and space away from the dominant enculturating forces of one’s home society thus presented an environment where one could feel she/he was thinking independently. As suggested by Jackie, the feeling that one was thinking independently led individuals to question their previous habits and query their overall purpose.

As such, the perception of free space and free time were important factors in the ‘freeing up’ of the individuals in order to search for self. Marie (French, 26) observed how self-questioning might be directed back towards the notion of an inner self: “When you are away from your homeland, from your family, from the factors that influence your identity, it might be a location to think more in a free way about all these questions of the true self, the true nature.” Ehud (Israeli, 34), when asked the role of freedom in his travels, expounded on freedom’s importance in his ability to connect to his ‘natural’ self: “Because I feel like as much as I’m free, I can connect to my natural self and be even more free. And more happiness, more happy when you connect to your natural self.” Thus, while freedom was the most commonly cited theme by respondents in the study, it was clear that like escape, freedom played a critical role in many of the lifestyle travellers’ engagements with questions of self. Furthermore, the use of the word ‘true’ by Marie and ‘natural’ by Ehud suggested a belief in an inner self, a point that is examined in depth in Chapter Six.

5.3.4 Freedom as a state of mind

A few of the respondents, however, did not view space and time away from their home societies as necessary elements in order to experience freedom. Another approach to freedom among the lifestyle travellers was to consider it as a state of mind that might be reached independently of external factors such as place. In regards to freedom as a state of mind, Barry (English, 32) questioned whether England had actually been restrictive for him or whether the restrictions had been partially self-imposed:
Freedom is a state of mind, and I must admit, I think because of my bad experiences that made me go, fuck off, I’m leaving England, it’s still a hangover a little bit that I’m sort of like, oh shit, I’m back in England, it went a bit wrong last time, let’s get the fuck out of here again. So that’s probably why I’m not so free, just sort of through conditioning. Not cause I’m not free, it’s just almost like going back to England is putting my brain back in the cage.

Largely clichéd, Barry travelled partly to free his mind. Or more accurately, to have kept his mind freer. When asked if freedom was important to his travel motivation, Felipe (Cuban 29) explained how free physical mobility was important to internal feelings of being free: “Through the feeling that you can move freely outside, through that movement outside, if you continue moving for long, then you can feel that you can move freely inside. You move freely outside and you can move freely inside.” Despite hopes that freedom might be felt independently of place, Felipe’s words illustrated that feeling free in one’s physical environment is often a prerequisite to feeling free internally. Yet, a couple of the lifestyle travellers attested to a changing role for freedom in their lives, in which they had gained the ability to feel free in most environments, as opposed to just in the lifestyle travel context.

As discussed in Section 5.3.1, many of the respondents expressed finding freedom in their first travels, and consequently, freedom played seemed to have played a role in having kept them engaged in lifestyle travel. On the other hand, a couple of the respondents described freedom as having decreased in importance as their travel experience increased. They portrayed a learned ability to transfer feelings of empowerment out of the travel context and into their everyday lives in their home societies, which gave credence to the argument that feelings of freedom could be modulated as a state of mind. Lev (French/Israeli, 30) portrayed having needed the travel context to feel free when he was younger and in a more experimental phase of life (which he described as ‘tasting’), but now having gained the ability to feel freer anywhere:

I don’t know if I feel, nowadays, if I feel more free when I’m travelling or when I’m not travelling. Before I used to feel that, but nowadays, when you get to the age of 30, I feel freer everywhere, even if I’m in France I feel free to do what I really want. So this freedom, it was more when I was twenty years, at the beginning when you go out from your place and you’re tasting.

For Lev, feeling freer was connected to chronological age and broadening life experience. Another respondent, when asked if freedom still played a role in her drive to travel, attributed her ongoing feelings of freedom to having found a work output that did not seem restrictive to her and having learned to place boundaries on societal demands.
I think I’m more free in my day to day life now than I have been so I guess the things that I loved about travel, which is the freedom and also enjoying different cultures, are things that I’ve now been able to bring back into my real life in Australia through doing the work that I do, but also through just growing up a little bit and being able to place better boundaries on what demands friends and family or work might make on me so that I still have time to do the stuff that’s important to me (Kat, Australian, 30).

Interestingly, the majority of the individuals that felt they had gained the ability to experience freedom in most areas of their life, rather than just in the travel context, intended to soon cease travelling as a lifestyle or had found employment in a job through which they travelled. This point is explored in more depth in Section 6.7 under the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers.

5.3.5 Seeing through the illusion of freedom

On a different note, there were also a number of interviewees who had openly expressed cynicism towards the notion of freedom through travel. Also, a couple of the respondents had not felt freer when travelling, than at home, during any stage of their travels. For the few lifestyle travellers that had noted that in some ways the freedom that travel appeared to provide was in fact a paradox, the idea was that what appeared free was in fact a socially and industrially constructed role. Indeed, Godbey (2003) has generally argued that it is not possible for an individual to act independently of societal pressures. As Brendon (Irish, 26) expounded after having considered freedom in terms of his educational background in anthropology:

This is where the anthropology stuff comes in, cause you know, I start thinking that you’re free within the context to act within the variables of the context, and every context will have set A, B, C, D kind of paths you can go so I suppose it’s not absolute freedom.

As some of the lifestyle travellers gained travel experience, their perspective on traveller roles had changed. After she had spoken intensely about the merits of freedom through travel, Tamara (Canadian/Indian 34) was then asked if travel was truly free. She responded:

This time I’m actually learning that there are now really set traveller’s routes. I don’t feel like there’s the same type of travel that ten years ago you could do because there’s now the traveller routes. When you come to India, it’s all very set, the travellers go in a similar flow and because it’s industry, the industry has now been created and almost has, kind of, made it concrete what that path is.
Tamara indirectly recognised that the institutionalisation of travel has hindered attempts to escape from consumerism. The implication of the impact of consumerism on freedom in lifestyle travel is that absolute freedom is not possible and that perceptions of freedom must be understood as relative. This finding provided further support for the conceptual pillar in modern leisure theory that freedom is relative as opposed to absolute (Veal & Lynch 2001).

Despite the industrially constructed paths that travellers mostly follow, Ryan (Australian, 48) maintained that travel offered both freedom and constraint, depending on the individual:

\[
\text{I think travel affords you a certain type of freedom, but I think for younger people, it can also become a constraint. Because if you’re, well maybe for anyone, maybe it’s for someone who isn’t as comfortable with self, but I think travel to some people can provide a group of friends and all those things that people seek in their life. A group of friends and being part of a scene and being part of a cultural context, whereas for me it’s what I like to escape from.}
\]

Ryan identified that travel has its own ‘scene’ or culture that can act as a constraint upon individuals. Thus for Ryan, he sought out to not only gain time alone as away from Australia, but also to largely escape from the culture of other travellers. Furthermore, Ryan suggested that travellers with questions concerning their sense of self might have been more inclined to seek camaraderie and identification with other travellers.

Like Sørensen (2003, p.854), who noted that the backpacker is “circumscribed by the norms and values of the backpacker travel culture,” Jackie (English, 26) gave further justification that the traveller scene has enculturating pressures and norms of behaviour (Godbey 2003), just like any other cultural context:

\[
\text{And, I think a lot people who you meet who are travelling are so desperate to become an individual that they just look and act like everyone else who’s travelling. The dreadlocks and all the way that everyone looks the same, they consider it a way of individuality, but I think they get pressured by the company that they keep to in some ways to fit in with that circle, just as the way that you got forced to fit in at school.}
\]

Notably, Jackie’s words suggested that individuals in search of their ‘unique self’ may have in some ways found the opposite of individuality. In these terms, whilst a relative freedom may have been gained from one’s home society, another socially constructed role has been added to one’s self-conception. Rather than claiming an absolute freedom from society through
travel, Max (English, 40) indirectly noted that lifestyle travel does subvert dominant forms of work/leisure balances in Western society:

Certainly, the average person is a bit like one of those little fucking sleeping pods in *The Matrix*. All they are is a fucking battery, supplying something for something else, you know. We’re breaking out of the mould a bit, certainly. At least we’re having fun.

Clearly, even if the freedom to which lifestyle travellers spoke was mostly a mirage, it was still a perception to which many attached meaning and importance. As Jamieson (1996) concluded, a perceived sense of freedom is important to the meanings that most travellers attach to their travel experiences.

Lastly, having neither valued the freedom that might be found in travel, nor having taken a cynical approach to it, it was also contended by one lifestyle traveller that freedom played no role whatsoever in having drawn him to the lifestyle.

It definitely has to do with my parents, and the fact that we have travelled a lot, and other than that, they gave me a tremendous amount of freedom when I was growing up. It’s really the way of my life since I’m a little kid so freedom is not the reason why I go travelling (Adam, Israeli, 25).

However, it seemed from Adam’s words that while finding freedom may have not been important to his current travels, feelings of freedom during travel experiences with his parents when young have had an influence upon him, and possibly even encouraged him to travel once he was an adult. Adam went on to explain that he clearly recognised why others with a different upbringing may have felt increased freedom in the travel lifestyle.

I clearly see that a lot of people that are on a daily basis strict with themselves, that come from a background that is more strict, not like I had, travel can free their mind and show them that they can be loose and can just enjoy things and not think all the time about the meaning and how society looks at it. In that case, for me it doesn’t really have that impact, but I can see how on other people it frees them, gives them the freedom that I don’t really search for because I always had it.

Here, the contrast between freedom in the travel context and in the home environment was attributed to the social environment in which one was raised. If one was raised in an environment that had already provided the individual with a perception of freedom, it was possible that the individual would not be impacted by freedom found in another seemingly non-restrictive environment such as the travel context. Yet, while Adam may not have been
impacted by an initial discovery of freedom through travel, he certainly seemed happy to consume the freedom that the travel lifestyle offered.

Moving back, however, to the majority of the respondents in the study, feelings of increased freedom through travel had made a substantial impact on the individuals’ desires to travel as a lifestyle. Within the perceived freedom of the travel context, individuals raised the importance of freedom to learn about the world and to engage in challenging situations as additional factors that contributed to their personal reasons for engaging in lifestyle travel. Moreover, as Jamieson (1996) reported that a traveller’s perception of freedom on the road can be a central feature or ‘precursor’, through which the occurrence of other experiences is catalysed, it also seemed here that perceived freedom functioned not only as a prerequisite in the search for self, but also in having given individuals opportunities for challenges and learning about the world that afforded occasions to reflect upon self-world relations and perceive self-insights. Therefore, the next section discusses the theme of learning through challenge in lifestyle travel.

5.4 Learning through challenge

Many of the respondents first set out travelling out of curiosity and a desire for discovery, challenge and adventure. However, while mentioned less than freedom and escape, some of the respondents also cited an ongoing desire to continue learning about other cultures and the exterior world in general through the course of their travels. Several respondents went on to profess a blurring of lines between learning about the exterior world and learning about their own selves. As such, learning was often conceptualised as self-insights derived from external mobility. Moreover, movement beyond the individual’s comfortable boundaries, where one was forced to negotiate ‘risky’ situations, also provided opportunities for learning and sometimes led to perceived self-change. Alec (Scottish, 34), as part of relating how he felt travel had affected him, noted how the challenges of travel can lead to learning: “I think it makes you a lot more broader-minded, open minded. You’re more accepting of a lot of things. It challenges you in a lot of ways. It teaches you patience. You just become broader, you learn so many things.” As with Alec’s words, learning was often set in the context of challenge. However, as discussed in Section 5.4.3, while challenging situations were perceived as opportunities for self-development, the lifestyle travellers did not identify these heightened experiential moments as being characteristic of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) description of flow experience.
Several of the respondents paralleled travel to education, having positioned it as a form of ongoing, informal learning. Not only was freedom associated with the power to choose, but education was also mentioned as an important element. As Felipe (Cuban, 29) expressed: “Education gives you the power to choose. And through your choices you can develop your own freedom. Not only formal education, but your own education through life gives you the power to choose.” Thus, travel was compared metaphorically to the ideal of university – “For me life is about learning, every moment is learning. Travel just means that the world is your university” (Tamara, Canadian/Indian, 34). These words were reminiscent of the Greek classical leisure ideal in which leisure was to be used as a source of learning and personal development (de Grazia 1962, Veal & Lynch 2001) and were evidence for Crompton’s (1979) suggestion that tourists sometimes seek novelty and education.

One way in which learning was described as having taken place through travel was through interaction with other cultures, including both that of the host destination and through meeting travellers of other nationalities and backgrounds. The respondents were afforded the opportunity to compare the way they were raised with other cultures, which harked back to the seventeenth and eighteenth century European Grand Tour as a form of education or finishing school (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). Adam (Israeli, 25), when asked if he remembered why he had first wanted to travel, replied:

I wanted to see other ways of living, to see if my own way of living is the right way, the way I was brought up. To see different colours, to hear different music, to meet people from all over the world; just to see what the outside world is about and to expand my ways of thinking and to open my mind.

Beyond cross-cultural comparisons, some of the respondents engaged in travel as part of a broader lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Having emphasised the value of seeing in ‘real life’ what one has read about in books, several interviewees professed having taken a philosophical approach to their travels within which one had opportunities to test life theory with practice. Through this type of approach, several of the lifestyle travellers depicted a blurring between what one learned about the world through travel and what one learned about one’s self. Anna (English, 25) volunteered that she had learned about her self through her travels and then expanded:
I felt like I’ve learned so much from each trip I’ve been on as well as all the experiences you have seeing new places, you know, I’m just really curious to see places, but I think you just learn a lot about the world and about people and about yourself from travel. By learning things about the world and about people, you learn things yourself that are for yourself. It’s difficult to draw the line between what you’re learning about the place you are and what it teaches you about yourself.

Anna expressed a two-fold relationship about learning in travel wherein she learned about the external world, and in doing so, also digested this knowledge in terms of how her own life was structured. Thus, learning through external movement was correlated with perceived self-insight, which can be linked back to Section 5.3.4 wherein a few of the lifestyle travellers had felt that their increasing travel experience had been associated with higher levels of personal empowerment.

However, the component of curiosity expressed in Anna’s words was not to be underestimated. It seemed that pure curiosity or the novelty of movement through the external world held a strong draw for some individuals to keep travelling. Steph (Australian, 23) pointed out that while searching for self was important to her travels, she also travelled out of a general curiosity about the world:

There’s still something about going to another country and talking to people and seeing stupas and mountains and trekking through a forest or whatever, that’s just so appealing, even without the whole self-discovery thing. It’s just so amazing to get outside of the box, just to see other things.

Yet, the value of continued learning, or even continued curiosity for that matter, was not appreciated by all of the lifestyle travellers. As Thomas (English, 29) voiced when having been asked whether learning played a role in why he travelled – “Certainly not learning. Curiosity to a certain extent, maybe before.” While curiosity may have played a stronger role in his earlier travels, Thomas did not view his travels as a learning experience but more as his only means of feeling he was free from a home society from which he felt alienated. Nonetheless, many of the other respondents did view travel as an avenue for learning, and in addition to learning on a subtle, constant level, several of the lifestyle travellers particularly believed that extreme or challenging situations presented some of the most rewarding moments in their ‘education’.
5.4.2 The importance of challenging moments

It was largely the challenge of the unknown and getting to know one’s boundaries in hard moments that the participants linked with learning. Thus, the narratives of several of the lifestyle travellers reflected the notion that self-insight or knowledge can be gained through the negotiation of risky situations (Walle 1997, Weber 2001). A few of the respondents, such as Andreas (Sweden, 25) when asked how he normally felt when he had returned home from a long trip, noted that the travel context offered challenges and adventure that could be perceived as missing from one’s home environment: “I just get a bit bored after a couple of weeks to be honest. Yeah, I like challenges and adventures, and at home everything’s too easy.” Andreas’ words can be linked back to Wang’s (1999) observation that perceived challenges can become rare for individuals in ‘everyday’ life, so that some individuals turn to travel experiences that can lead to a ‘trial of the self’.

Thus, it was frequently expressed that individuals found themselves in challenging situations that they would have been unlikely to have entered into if they had not been travelling: “I put myself in positions, many times, that I would have never been in otherwise if I was just regularly living at home, and some of them have been hairy, dangerous predicaments and it’s all part of your growth and development” (Thomas, English, 29). As such, challenging and even dangerous moments were linked with perceived self-development. Resultantly, some of the lifestyle travellers actively sought challenging positions during their travels, which was consistent with Noy’s (2004) claim that extended travel may include the deliberate seeking of risk and adventure so as to generate personal changes that are perceived as positive. Moreover, White and White’s (2004, p.212) similar findings with long-term travellers that the travel context had provided their respondents with an environment in which they felt they were testing themselves and could “search for a revitalized sense of self” was substantiated.

Furthermore, when asked why she travelled, in addition to learning and exploring, Fiona (New Zealander, 23) responded: “And a part of it also is the challenge, like I know from when I went to South America; I wanted to put myself outside my comfort barriers as well. I just needed to expand and see some of the world and challenge myself.” In general, these hard moments were expressed as means of learning about one’s self. Through the experience of situations in which one was unsure of how to act, respondents expressed that they could test themselves and learn from the experience. As Tamara (Canadian/Indian, 34) stated: “All these things that you endure and then you experience and that you learn so much about yourself that you don’t even know is within your self and that might not even have a chance
to come out if you didn’t travel.” Thus, challenging experiences were perceived by some of the respondents as fruitful moments in the search for self.

It is also worth noting that whether the lifestyle travellers engaged in challenges so as to learn about the self, or simply for the symbolic social value in narrating self (Elsrud 2001), is open to debate. One means of earning social capital within the travel lifestyle can be the narration of dangerous or extremely uncomfortable situations of an intrepid nature to other travellers (Elsrud 2001). Thus, part of the rhetoric of the ‘true traveller’ includes tests and challenges. In addition to learning about other cultures, Andreas (Swedish, 25) noted the importance of challenge to his travel motivation, but at the same time, touted a perceived distance between his travels and those of less ‘adventurous’ travellers or tourists:

I like the challenge. To go places where people say, oh no, you can’t go. Why not? No, no, there’s no roads, there’s no transport, it’s very tricky. When I was in Africa people told me Lesotho is very hard to travel in, and yeah, it was. I had to walk with my backpack for maybe 30 to 40 kms before I actually got a ride from hitchhiking, and I guess this really scares a lot of people. I think it’s funny; I really like the challenge.

Here, Andreas has attempted a representation of his travels as laborious (Boorstin 1964) and physically and psychologically challenging (Weber 2001). Such a representation helps to perpetuate a perceived dichotomy between traveller and tourist.

5.4.3 Seeking flow experience?

When asked whether the challenging moments in their travel experiences resembled the focused moments described by Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) concept of flow experience, most of the lifestyle travellers did not identify with this leisure and adventure recreation explanatory tool. Flow experience was described to the respondents in interview situations as an internal state of being characterised by a focused concentration wherein one experiences a loss of self-consciousness. While some of the respondents related to having experienced flow in various aspects of their lives, such as when intensely involved in physical activity, most of these respondents did not feel that flow had occurred more frequently during travel than at other times and places. Although several of the respondents had experienced heightened or special moments during their travels, these moments were mostly characterised by a feeling of happiness, belonging and reflectivity as opposed to the loss of self-consciousness that characterises flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Thomas (English, 29), who felt he
did not experience flow during travel, described the difference between these types of moments:

[Flow experience] moments are those where you literally live in that second, like that real present moment awareness where the rest of the world kind of ceases to exist and everything’s slow motion. That’s more exhilaration, that’s like total focus. It’s kind of the opposite, it’s like those moments of feeling totally peaceful and at home when your mind and brain are totally like flopped open and everything is happy.

Hence, most of the respondents did not feel that they were seeking flow experience through their travels or that the experience of episodes of flow while travelling had served as a motivational factor for their lifestyle. This finding was inconsistent with Macbeth’s (1988) proposition that the episodic nature of flow can be extended to a lifestyle level of analysis.

Lastly, the successful negotiation of challenging moments that were perceived as risky and thrilling left some of the respondents with the excitement of an adrenalin rush. However, even subtle moments of learning were described as possible generators of a welcome adrenalin kick. As Adam (Israeli, 25), who also did not feel that freedom plays a role in his reasons for travel, commented on adrenalin:

I’ve always been an adrenalin addict. Maybe it can be the string that connects. Having fun, curiosity, it’s maybe the middle string that connects everything. Cause when I learn something, I get thrilled and enthusiastic, and that’s adrenalin for me.

Thus, for Adam, it seemed that sensation-seeking through learning may have characterised his travels.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has addressed the themes of escapism, freedom and learning through challenge as these concepts were linked to self-searching among many of the respondents and influenced on a broader level why the individuals travelled as a lifestyle. While several of the lifestyle travellers identified a need to escape from aspects of their home societies and their individual lives at home, an even greater number espoused a Romantic vision of freedom through lifestyle travel. Lifestyle travel allegedly afforded both increased free space and free time away from the societies that they had hoped to escape and, in turn, provided perceived ‘elbow room’ for introspection. Hence, not only did freedom emerge as the most cherished
value among the lifestyle travellers, but freedom also appeared to act as a precursor in the search for self.

Furthermore, the chapter discussed the role of learning through challenge for lifestyle travellers, as many of the interviewees cited challenging situations as opportunities to learn both about the exterior world and one’s self. Though challenging experiences were linked to fruitful moments in the search for self, the majority of the respondents did not equate these heightened moments with flow experience and as such, did not feel that flow experience played a role in why they travelled as a lifestyle. Now that escapism, freedom and learning through challenge have been examined as surrounding issues in the search for self for lifestyle travellers, the next chapter is focused directly on the meanings that the lifestyle travellers attached to the search for self and the respondents’ future travel intentions.
Chapter Six – Interpreting the search for self and future travel intentions

6.1 Introduction

A complex array of approaches to searching for self emerged that indicated that the search for self played an important role for many of the lifestyle travellers. This chapter interprets the meanings that the lifestyle travellers attached to the search for self and then concludes with a discussion of the variations within future travel intentions of the respondents. The chapter begins by discussing the varying ways in which the lifestyle travellers directly approached the concept of seeking self, including multiple perspectives on how the search for self was conceived and variations on when during their travels self-searching had been perceived as taking place. In many ways, the complexities in trying to understand the role of the search for self among the lifestyle travellers reflected some of the theoretical debates over self that were reviewed in Chapter Two. As part of this discussion, the value of the concept of existential authenticity to tourism studies is questioned.

Next, differences are considered as to whether the respondents who searched for self had been doing so overtly or as a subtle background process. Moreover, the voices of the respondents that did not feel that the search for self played a significant role in their travels are considered. The chapter then examines how successful the lifestyle travellers who had been searching for self perceived themselves in their respective searches. Lastly, the chapter looks at the intended future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers, as there were a range of perspectives on how they might construct their future travels, if they intended to keep travelling at all.

6.2 Approaches to the search for self

In one form or another, the concept of searching for self was voiced as a critical motivating factor for the majority of the lifestyle travellers. As Simon (Swiss, 50), the oldest of the respondents, related “I think everyone looks, searching for them self.” Another seasoned traveller, Ryan (Australian, 48) provided support for the importance of the role of self in lifestyle travel: “The main focus of my travel is about self.”

While the narrations of the lifestyle travellers contained complex and differing voices that included multiple perspectives on how the search for self was conceived and approached, the concept of existential authenticity did not emerge directly as an important theme in
discussions with the participants. The term existential authenticity was not quoted in questioning respondents as it would have required an accompanying explanation of both existentialism and authenticity. Albeit many of the respondents hoped to experience their ‘true selves’ through travel, issues relating to existential authenticity were instead voiced by the respondents using a vocabulary of self. Indeed, none of the respondents used the word ‘authenticity’ during the interviews, whereas the notion of self was volunteered regularly as a central organising feature of the discussions. With a significant academic discourse on self to draw from in the social sciences (Ashmore & Jussim 1997), the interviewees’ tendency in having favoured the discourse on self suggests that existential authenticity may be a redundant concept for tourism studies. This point is especially relevant when noting that while academic dialogues on self have moved on to conceptualise selves as multiple and relational (Finnegan 1997), existential authenticity rests on the contested assumption that a true self exists. Thus, whilst other tourism researchers have sought to bury objective and constructive interpretations of authenticity (Reisinger and Steiner 2006), this finding suggests that the same might be done for existential authenticity’s recent entry into tourism scholarship.

In returning to the various approaches to the search for self for the lifestyle travellers, the search for self was often described by the respondents through phrases such as ‘learning about/getting to know the self’, ‘taking care of the self’ and/or ‘finding one’s self’. At times, the phrases were used interchangeably, while in other instances it appeared that the clichés held somewhat different meanings for the individuals. However, a common thread among the phrases was that they indicated that most of the lifestyle travellers were seeking self as an inner object that could be found and developed. The lifestyle travellers who searched for an essential inner self reflected a modern view of the self as a developmental project, a theme that still pervades much of Western society (Baumeister 1986) and was articulated in developmental psychology through Maslow’s (1971) humanist concept of self-actualisation. These lifestyle travellers with a developmental perspective reflected Davidson’s (2005, p.43) study of travellers in India where it was concluded that the travellers had been in “hope of transforming the ‘Self’.” Moreover, Anderskov (2002) had found similar results in concluding that one of the main functions of backpacking for individuals that had travelled extensively was personal development and self-realisation.
6.2.1 Learning about and taking care of the self

Tamara (Canadian/Indian, 34), who had been travelling for the majority of the last seventeen years, summed up the assumption of many of the lifestyle travellers that an inner self existed and could be discovered in having said: “Travelling is really about your self, about learning what’s inside of your self.” Or as Thomas (English, 29), who had quit his job and sold all his belongings in order to travel in Asia indefinitely, had related: “You got to be true to your self. You got to do what you want to do.” Thomas had felt that he had not been acting true to his self in his last job. Here, the idea of an inner self was relied upon as a source of moral direction in decision making (McAdams 1997).

It was most common for the lifestyle travellers to view travel as a developmental process of getting to know the self and learning about the self. This was in contrast to a few of the respondents who felt they had ultimately ‘found themselves’ through travel. In most cases though, learning about the self was communicated as processual: “Every day you learn about you. Every day you know you more and more. You know who you are more and more. Maybe it’s really important to know who you are. For me, it’s really important.” (Eric, French, 35). For Eric, who had sold his business in France in order to travel and work in Asia indefinitely, learning to be true to his self was a top priority that required cultivation. Hence, developing knowledge about one’s self seemed to function as an ideal for many of the lifestyle travellers. Rather than ultimately finding one’s self, Brendon (Irish, 26), when asked if his search for self could be fulfilled, conceived the search for self as a never-ending state of becoming:

You can either work at it and say that I’ve reached this point, this is where I’m going, I’m here, or you can have it as a kind of ideal, to stay in dynamic movement towards so even if you reach what would be perceived as a really, really high state, you still always have this ideal to push and push so you’re within this constant state of becoming, becoming, becoming.

Brendon’s perspective certainly reflected Maslow’s (1971, p.175) depiction of the goal of self-actualisation, which was described as “the development of the fullest height that the human species can stand up to or that the particular individual can come to.”

Lev (French/Israeli 30), who felt that he knew himself in a different way after his travels, commented on how learning about one’s self may be fomented by exposure to the varying cultural contexts offered through the travel lifestyle: “You know yourself maybe better. You know yourself in different situations from before. So, of course you discover things about yourself because you naturally are in different situations.” Thus, some of the
respondents viewed ‘self-discovery’ as more fruitfully undertaken when physically away from their home contexts as travel allowed for the experience of new and different situations. This was reflected by Ehud (Israeli, 34), who when asked about travel’s role in regards to self, related that it was helpful to be away from one’s comfort zone in order to get to know the self better: “It gives you angles, gives you experiences, as you experience yourself in different situations you know yourself better. As much as you break your routine, your chain, you will be a better man, better person; you will know yourself better.” The new and potentially challenging situations that the travel context had presented were placed in contrast to the ‘chains’ of mundane life.

Learning about the self was positioned as ‘natural’ through travel, regardless of what one did with one’s time while travelling. Fiona (New Zealander, 23), when asked if travel had affected her had pondered, “I’d be surprised if you could travel and not learn about your self.” Hence, the lifestyle travellers who believed in travel as a context conducive to learning about one’s self gave support to tourism scholarship that has cited the construction of self as important to travel experience (Davidson 2005, Desforges 2000, Neumann 1992, Noy 2004, O’Reilly C.C. 2005, 2006). However, a couple of the respondents noted that they would be searching for self even if they had not physically travelled. As Alec (Scottish, 34), a yoga instructor on the island of Koh Tao in Thailand and another traveller of seventeen years, stated when asked if he was searching for anything in regards to his travels:

I think I would have had that whether I would have just stayed in one place all the time. That inner inquiry into the nature of the mind and the spirit; I always had that since I was very young. I think the travelling has maybe amplified it and accelerated certain parts of it. I suppose it [travel] could be a physical representation of the inner search which is going on.

Therefore, it is likely that some of the respondents were already primed to search for self prior to their travels. Steph (Australian, 23) reflected this notion by having suggested that the need to change an aspect of her self had led her to travel:

When I left Australia I thought I was going because I wanted to be a big explorer and I was going to conquer the world or whatever, but I think it was more to do with I knew I had to change something in my life and I wasn’t sure what it was.

Travel as a context where the search for self can be intensified or accelerated was reiterated by Brendon (Irish, 26), who had returned to India to ‘re-spark’ positive changes in his self that he had perceived after his first trip to India:
It was like I went through an accelerated period of change and of reconciliation with self. I think travel can do that as well, it can kind of accelerate development. You can have a lot of pretty intense encounters within your period.

The humanist rhetoric of developing and getting to know the inner self was also given support by Charlotte (Canadian, 26), who reinforced the notion that searching for self need not only take place in the context of travel: “It was a goal to know my self, and travel just kind of went along with it.”

Another respondent likened maintaining a coherent sense of self to a process of healing in which one takes care of the self. Her travels were depicted as escaping from personal problems. However, for Kat (Australian, 30), her travels have been less about searching and development, but more about caring for her self: “I think it’s always been taking care of the self because that first trip came out of my parents’ divorce which was messy and nasty and it was just about needing to distance myself and my sister from that situation.” Taking care of the self was conceptualised by a couple of the respondents as an ongoing process of checking up on the self or looking after the self, a practice similar to Foucault’s (1984) *The Care of the Self*, wherein one’s self was attended to and stylised in its present form, rather than sought after as an inner essence.

6.2.2 Finding one’s self

In contrast to O’Reilly’s (2006, p.1004) claim that “backpacking today is often presented in terms of the need to ‘find myself’,” for these lifestyle travellers it was rare to have used the terms ‘finding’ or ‘found’ in regards to self, possibly because ‘finding yourself’ is heavily clichéd in travel rhetoric. Nonetheless, Julie (German, 27), seemingly contented with her relatively new life as a dive instructor in Thailand, made the rare claim of having found her self in a final sense:

I’m not looking for something anymore, I found it. I found myself during the travelling. That’s for sure. I know now what I want, what is important for me, what I don’t need. I know me better now and I know how I react to situations and I’m much more balanced now. I like myself now.

Another interviewee, when asked if he was looking for anything through his travel in India responded:
I was tired of looking for something, and I was trying just to stop my looking and just finding. In India, I found what I was looking for. I found myself. I feel I have come back. My travels have taken me by hand again to my own home. I was wandering out of my home place, I was just lost. I believe I have never changed since being born, I have just been diverted (Felipe, Cuban, 29).

Felipe added credibility to the notion that the concept of ‘home’ has become increasingly blurred in late modernity as individuals split their attention and presence between multiple places (Hannerz 2002). Moreover, when Felipe was asked if he perceived that he had ultimately found himself he expanded on what turned out to be his concept of enlightenment:

I feel that enlightenment is not like a light that comes to you, it’s not like a finish line, it’s not like something that you arrive and everything is perfect. I feel like enlightenment is just the perfect way you can be your self, and through being your self, enjoying more.

Hence, while Felipe’s view on the search for self clearly rested on the assumption that he has an innate true self that could be discovered, he discounted the possibility of suddenly knowing or finding one’s self in a final sense. This sentiment was shared by Thomas (English, 29), who highlighted an inevitability that one will change again.

Everything’s changing constantly, as are you, so the guy who I am today isn’t necessarily the guy I am tomorrow, so, I think I’ve had moments where I felt like I’ve known myself absolutely, right there and then, but I think I’ve lost that now actually a little bit.

Most of the respondents did not expect to fully know her/his self. As was neatly stated by Marie (French, 26), when asked if she ever expected to know her self entirely: “To find myself is a big word, but I’d like to find how I want to live, where I want to live and what I want to do.” While several clichés may have been invoked to represent a search for self that many directly undertook in lifestyle travel, the importance that the search had in giving meaning to the lives of many of the respondents was not to be underestimated. Marie’s use of travel as a means of having tried to address major life decisions challenged Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2000) claim that travel is used to avoid major life decisions. In Marie’s case, travel was instead used to directly engage with making major life decisions.

The cliché of finding one’s self was even somewhat lampooned by Laura (Canadian, 28), who seemed to realise for the first time during the interview that she had used travel as a means of working with issues of self:
I think it was when I first went to England, when I was thinking, ok, well, maybe I just need another year off to find myself. I used that term, ha, ha. Maybe I need to leave the country and actually live somewhere else and find myself in a different country where I don’t know anyone and I can sort of start fresh and go from there. I don’t know anyone so I can be whoever I want, change my personality, which I always sort of figured I’d do but hasn’t really happened.

With these latter words, rather than seeking a true internal self, Laura seemed to have embraced the idea of changing her environment so that she could be whoever she wanted. Laura related to a concept of self that has the potential for multiple selves or performances, which is more aligned with Goffman’s (1959) notion that different roles can be played for different people. In a similar vein, when asked what he liked about lifestyle travel, Barry (English, 32) related: “I suppose it is that kind of, you can just shed a life each time you change places. You can just change your life each time you want to go somewhere new.” Hence, for Laura and Barry, self was not necessarily an innate object to be developed, but instead multiple and open to various performances. These views on self were more representative of the trend in social science to conceive of self as relational, multiple and contextually dependent (Burkitt 1991, Finnegan 1997, Vaughan & Hogg 2002). However, for Laura, her hope to change into ‘whoever she wanted’ had not transpired. Nonetheless, these views represented a sharp divergence in how self was conceptualised among the respondents.

6.3 Narrating self through perceptions of positive self-change

Rather than directly address questions of self, many of the lifestyle travellers preferred to focus on perceived positive self-changes that they had underwent as a result of their travels. This aligned with Desforges’ (2000) finding that travellers may attempt to answer questions of self through the narration of perceived self-changes. Moreover, in Noy’s (2004) work with backpackers’ narrations of their travel experiences, many respondents also told of personal changes as a result of their trips, often depicted in terms of maturation and development. Yet, Noy (2004) also pointed out that whilst for his interviewees the overt topic of narration may have been perceived personal changes, what underlay the core of these narratives were issues of self.

As part of perceived learning about their inner selves, several of the lifestyle travellers made narrative claims at having become more confident, stronger, empowered, more open-minded and/or patient. Similar themes of self-change were found in Noy’s (2004) interviews with backpackers where some of the respondents attested to being more confident, happy, tolerant and patient as a result of travel. When asked if she had changed as a result of her
travels, Kat (Australian, 30), described, “I feel like the travels that I’ve done have definitely made me who I am in terms of broadening perspectives, a main one, and in terms of my values and belief system.” Among perceived changes in personality, increased confidence was linked to the act of travelling alone: “It also gave me much more confidence in myself. I saw I was capable of going somewhere without other people to rely on. You get much more self-sufficient and your confidence goes up” (Brendon, Irish, 26). The respondents also tied confidence to other concepts such as strength and empowerment. As Fiona (New Zealander, 23) communicated about her perceived self-change: “I guess it felt empowering, and just having those experiences as your own made me feel stronger.” Furthermore, Andreas (Swedish, 25) responded when asked if travel had affected him:

It makes you stronger. I feel more confident going home. When you travel there’s no net, there’s not going to be your parents to take care of you if anything happens. When you get sick, if you’re a single traveller, there won’t be anyone you can actually trust to take care of you, so it’s all about you, so you become a stronger person.

Repeatedly, strength and other perceived benefits of travel were connected to having moved farther away from the ‘safety net’ of Western society and having been forced to overcome challenges.

6.4 Self-searching and transitioning into ‘adulthood’

Unsurprisingly, several of the lifestyle travellers felt that the bulk of their self-development had taken place in their earlier travels, at times when the individuals would still have been theoretically transitioning into ‘adulthood’. This was in contrast to some of the other lifestyle travellers who envisioned self-development and gaining self-knowledge as a lifelong process. Hence, several lifestyle travellers relegated questions of self to a developmental stage in one’s life, as characterised by Erikson (1968) in his discussion of the ‘normal’ identity crisis that accompanies the theoretical transition from a childhood identity to an adult identity (Cote & Levine 2002). As Andreas further suggested, “Yeah, I guess you’re changing all the time. But I’m guessing the first trip is probably the one where you change the most.”

For many of the interviewees, these types of perceived changes did take place primarily during their first long trip away. These respondents reflected Richards and King’s (2003) suggestion that more experienced travellers were less likely to be trying to overtly ‘find themselves’. Moreover, these lifestyle travellers furthered the representation of one’s first
extended backpacking trip as a rite-of-passage (O’Reilly 2006, Riley 1988), wherein experimentation with temporary roles is institutionally condoned (Cote & Levine 2002).

Also having felt that self-change or personal development took place more intensely as a young adult, Max (English, 40) related:

It’s the whole growing as a person thing, isn’t it? I travelled at a reasonably young age, even at twenty-three; I was still sort of a young adult. I was still developing ideas, I suppose. The ones I did develop, I developed whilst I was still travelling so probably slightly different from people who are just sitting around at home.

While issues of self among the interviewees were by no means entirely limited by age, it was suggested that chronological age did play a factor in searching for self:

I think when you’re younger you tend to be seeking and searching more. Well, it stands to reason. Someone in their twenties, who’s looking for who and how they are and be, you know, they’re not quite sure. Someone in their thirties and forties tends to be a bit clearer on that. Maybe in age, one would hope that people are more comfortable in their own skin. They’ve had longer to live in it. I know I certainly am (Ryan, Australian, 48).

In terms of the intensity of self-change as individuals gained travel experience, some of the travellers felt that as they had gained experience and maturity, self-change had slowed down, with some having believed that they would not change anymore. As Tracey (English, 31) related when asked if she felt she had changed as a result of her travels: “I’m much more comfortable with what I want to do. I don’t see myself changing anymore than I have done now.” Having associated her state at the time with happiness, one of the respondents even displayed reluctance towards further change – “I don’t think that there’s much more to change. I don’t want to change anymore, actually. You can always work on your self, but you don’t want to change anymore” (Julie, German, 27).

6.5 Overtly seeking versus ‘natural’ change

While most of the respondents found it important that they underwent ‘positive’ self-changes during their travels, the majority of them did not directly seek self-change when travelling. In contrast, the development of the self was often perceived as an ‘organic’ by-product of travel. As Adam (Israeli, 25) commented on the role of self-change as a potential motivator in travel: “It’s important that they happen, of course I would like to see myself as a dynamic organism, as in I’m changing and I can see it.” But, it was suggested that self-
change came ‘naturally’ as a result of the travel process rather than something for which one lucidly strived: “I’m not coming [travelling] to change, you know. I’m not travelling for changing myself. But, I change myself. But I don’t come for this. I know it’s coming alone so I don’t look for this. I know it’s coming slowly, slowly, day by day” (Eric, French, 35). As such, it seemed that the search for self was often perceived as a subtle process that took place gradually. Nonetheless, it was often not something for which one consciously aimed. As Ryan (Australian, 48) related: “I’m not that great when it comes to personal growth; it has to happen organically for me. I don’t ever go away with the task of changing or growing, it’s a lot less defined than that.” Thus, the search for self in the travel context emerged as a process that many individuals did not lucidly seek.

As such, many of the issues of self that take place in the long-term travel lifestyle may occur subconsciously.

Never when I had gone out to do the travel, did I feel like I was searching for an identity. It’s only upon reflection after the fact, that now, twelve years later, after also all the travel, I can look back and say, wow, you know, in Africa, in that year, yeah, I was searching for identity or sense of self or, you know, sense of freedom in order to arrive at self (Tamara, Canadian/Indian, 34).

Hence, self-seeking may have functioned for some individuals as a process that ran in the background of the conscious, that one might have taken the time to reflect upon or not. As Tracey (English, 31) suggested of noticing self-change: “I like to travel just for the sheer fun of it. I think if it changes me it does so without me realising it. I have obviously noticed changes in myself, but I just don’t dwell on it as much as other people.”

Thus, the lifestyle travellers approached the search for self in a number of ways, ranging from having overtly searched for self to an appreciation of the search for self as a background process that could be evidenced by perceived positive self-changes. Although the search for self was frequently cited as a process that underpinned many of the respondents’ travels, a minority of the lifestyle travellers did not feel that the search for self was relevant to their reasons for travel. However, based on their narratives, it appeared that these individuals may have instead undertaken the bulk of their self-questioning at earlier stages in their lives, and not necessarily in the travel context. Ryan (Australian, 48), who had been travelling on and off over the last thirty years commented:

I’ve never for one moment felt that travel was to find myself, ever. It’s never to take care of my self, it’s never to set out to personally grow, and it’s never to find myself. It’s all about being, and it’s more about just experiencing life as it unfolds. I don’t kind of go to search or seek at all.
Yet, as mentioned by Ryan in Section 6.4, he had appreciated self-change as an organic process and had become more comfortable with his self over time. Hence, it was once again demonstrated how individuals were sometimes more apt to identify with perceived positive self-changes than with the notion of directly questioning and seeking self.

For Adam (Israeli, 25) it appeared that his upbringing had afforded him a firm sense of self prior to engagement in the travel lifestyle.

I’ve met dozens and dozens of people that are searching for getting to know their self much better and self-identity and to improve and to understand how they act in the company of other people, and how they react in certain situations, and to see how strongly are their individual… all these things I already know about my self so I wasn’t really searching for them on my trips.

Adam felt his parents allowed him a large amount of freedom growing up, so that he could construct some aspects of his self as he perceived desirable, rather than having been driven by their expectations. Nonetheless, for those who did question notions of who they were during their travels, a period of perceiving one’s self as being lost was often experienced.

6.6 Searching but not finding

It was relatively rare among the respondents to claim that a firm sense of self had been achieved. In addition to Adam (Israeli, 25), who had claimed a stable sense of self prior to his travels, Tamara (Canadian/Indian 34) felt that the act of travel had helped her to attain a solid sense of self: “I’m quite certain that I would not have been able to arrive at the solid sense of self that I feel now inside and out without having travelled.” Alec (Scottish, 34) noted how parts of different cultures might be used in constituting one’s sense of self: “Every culture on the planet has something rich and diverse to offer, so you pick up little bits and pieces of them, which I suppose you just integrate into yourself as you just go along, consciously or subconsciously.” Alec’s words bespeak of Hannerz’s (1990, 2002) description of the cosmopolitan as a cultural figure. In this sense, cosmopolitanism, as selective appropriation from the world’s cultural forms (Hannerz 2002), here constituted through the vehicle of lifestyle travel, might be used in constructing a more coherent sense of self. Yet, such a claim was rare amongst the lifestyle travellers.

Whilst many of the respondents saw themselves in the midst of a developmental process of learning about their inner self and potentialities, a few of the respondents were not so optimistic about the fruitfulness of travel as a vehicle towards gaining a more secure sense of
self. Jackie (English, 26) hinted at self potentially becoming more problematic through travel as she suggested it was necessary to reassemble the pieces of one’s idea of self that may be shaken up through extended journeying:

I suppose you have to develop a peace with yourself because you’ve turned your whole world upside down by starting travelling and then you have to put yourself back together in some ways. You’ve left what you’re from and everything that defines you so you have to get the bits and put them all back together and make yourself again.

The turning upside down of one’s world through travel, as Jackie suggested, can sometimes lead the individual to a feeling of identity confusion. Here, identity confusion may be reflective of a widening multiphrenic condition in Western society, which Gergen (1991, p.73) described as “the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments.” Indeed, as Neumann (1992, p.183) stated: “Travel often provides situations and contexts where people confront alternative possibilities for belonging to the world and others that differ from everyday life.”

Marie (French, 26) reflected on the perhaps paradoxical nature of travel as a means of answering questions of self:

I was a bit lost because I didn’t have someone that told me this is the way that I can take and I wanted to find it by myself so it’s like, you are a bit lost in the world and your self. I thought that in travelling I will find a solution. It’s not really true, for me. It’s not by travelling that you can find a solution to your conflict, it’s like an illusion from it. People that are travelling a lot, they are looking for their identity more than people that are working back home; but they also avoid this question by travelling. It’s like a paradox.

By questioning the cultural assumptions upon which they had been raised and having engaged with new multiple sets of ways of living, some of the respondents, such as Marie, encountered a feeling of being metaphorically lost at some stage during their travels. Yet, none of the other respondents viewed travel as a paradoxical means of searching for self as Marie did. As such, while a few of the lifestyle travellers felt they had derived a stronger sense of self from their experiences travelling among various cultures and interacting with other travellers, and others had still felt in the midst of negotiating these possibilities, a small number of the respondents had openly lamented searching for ‘something’ without finding any answers.

These latter respondents did not perceive the multiphrenic condition in a positive or liberating light, as postmodern theory has suggested they might have done (Seigel 2005), but instead characterised their failing searches as stressful, which echoes Erikson’s (1968)
description of an identity crisis. As Alec (Scottish, 34) described, while travel can help to shape who you are, its possibilities can at the same time be overwhelming:

It’s like a double-edged knife. In some ways it’s really giving you that sense because you’re getting a lot of experiences that are shaping who you are, but at the same time, I was doing so much of it, so much travelling, then you’re like, ok, where do I, you’re like swimming amongst it. And that’s one of the dangers of too much travelling, getting kind of really lost in it.

Iso-Ahola (1980) noted that it would intuitively seem that the more alternatives that a person had, the more freedom they would feel they possessed. However, Iso-Ahola (1980) suggested that too many options can become confusing as opposed to liberating. Laura (Canadian, 28) volunteered that she felt lost after several years of travel as her lifestyle: “I’m almost thirty and I feel like I just graduated but I’m ten years older and I have no idea where I want to go and what I want to do. I’m feeling a bit lost.”

Moreover, even if individuals do not believe they are lost, society can sometimes lead them to question whether they are. This is often derived from the negative connotations Western society may attach to ongoing drifting without a culturally sanctioned purpose. As discussed in Section 3.3, in the mid to late twentieth century before backpacking became popular, drifting had been widely judged as hedonistic and even anarchistic (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). While backpacking as a one-off rite-of-passage now seems to be institutionally sanctioned (O’Reilly 2006) as a moratorium before the assumption of ‘adult responsibilities’ (Cote & Levine 2002), the continuation and repetition of travel as a lifestyle is still a relative anomaly (Noy & Cohen 2005, Westerhausen 2002). Once an individual has exceeded the culturally dominant perception of how long a ‘rite-of-passage’ should last, individuals may be forced to battle a perception of their travels as deviant.

I think when you have been travelling or moving for seventeen years, and you’re kind of not living conventionally, I think a lot of other people, kind of, feel like you’re searching and you’re lost and so you can’t help but then also have to ask yourself, gee, am I, am I searching for something, am I lost? So, that kind of processing, I’ve always had to do (Tamara, Canadian/Indian, 34).

While society may signal to some lifestyle travellers that they should feel lost, there is still the belief among many travellers that if one perseveres then a realisation or moment of enlightenment may come. Despite perceived pressure from society, some lifestyle travellers continued waiting for an epiphany of sort, and in some cases did not even know what they were looking for. As Charlotte (Canadian, 26) disclosed, “It’s like I don’t even know what
I’m chasing after anymore. And everyone’s like, just be patient and it will come to you one day.” Hoping for an epiphany or a self-realising moment can continue for years. As Laura (Canadian, 28) responded when asked if she was searching for anything through travel:

> It’s not coming to me. I have no idea what I’m looking for. I mean I’ve been trying to figure it out for the last at least five years and what I want to do in school by talking to different people and getting their opinions. Just sort of trying to get an epiphany.

In some cases, it seemed that individuals conflated questions of who they are with what they’d like to do as a career. Another interviewee, Fiona (New Zealander, 23) shared this sentiment:

> Looking back on the last few years that I’ve had those trips, I would say that I was lost. I felt lost. I didn’t know what I wanted to do as a career, I didn’t know where I wanted to be, you know, you finish a degree and what do you do now, right?

It is possible that it is easier to face being lost in terms of career choice rather than facing a wider anxiety over one’s ideas of self. As Marie (French 26) pointedly remarked when asked if she had lucidly recognised that she had felt lost:

> It was maybe too dangerous to think like that because it’s very close to conflict with myself. I wanted to say to myself that I was lost, that was a reality, but I didn’t want to think myself like that. You can’t say, wow, I’m totally lost in my life.

Marie communicated that feeling lost is often not a conscious thought process and she felt, from her perspective as a student with a Masters degree in psychology, that its recognition could be a psychologically damaging admission. From this viewpoint, it was not surprising that several of the respondents only admitted to themselves that they had been lost and searching for a more secure sense of self upon reflection later in their travels, at a point when searching for self may not have been as relevant for the individual.

Lastly, while the array of possibilities that travel offered may have led some individuals to a feeling of being lost or ‘swimming amongst it’, as Alec put it, it cannot be assumed that travel alone led these individuals to a sense of identity confusion. A feeling of being lost or confused, as a general saturation of one’s sense of self in late modernity (Gergen 1991), may have preceded the act of travel itself. As the lifestyle travellers covered a wide spectrum in terms of how successful they had perceived themselves thus far in their respective searches
for self, it came as no surprise that the respondents had a variety of intentions as to how they would construct their future travels, if they intended to keep travelling at all.

6.7 Future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers

Among the interviewees, four main themes emerged as to the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers. At one end, factors such as age, desire for comfort, and cynicism towards the lifestyle lead travellers towards a decreased engagement or end of participation in the travel lifestyle. Another theme was to take the ideals and values of the travel existence and try to integrate them into one’s home life or career, thus giving life a feel of continued travel. Yet, another segment of the respondents were happy to continue travelling in the manner they had been, with a primary justification being that travel had become part of the individual’s self. And lastly, some of the respondents had shifted the aim of their travels towards finding an environment they could happily settle down in, giving hints of a search for utopia. Within each of these four themes, in many cases linkages could be drawn between the future travel directions of the respondents and the respective roles of the search for self in their travels.

6.7.1 Growing cynics and a desire for comfort

A few of the respondents had developed either a cynicism towards lifestyle travel, or had felt the lifestyle wearing upon them, and expressed doubt that they would continue long-term travel as a way of life. For one respondent, increasing age and a desire for more creature comfort had been beginning to sap his motivation to engage in lifestyle travel:

The comfort thing has become a big issue for me. I don’t know if it’s an age thing. I don’t know, it’s just that roughing it gets harder, maybe I’m prematurely ageing, I get all these aches and twelve-hour bus journeys and twenty-hour train journeys don’t have the excitement and appeal to me as they once did (Brendon, Irish, 26).

As lifestyle travel often involves arduous trips and less material comforts than when one is not travelling, it is possible that the novelty of completing difficult journeys may wear off after time and eventually tire the individual. In Wilson’s (2006) work with New Zealanders on overseas experiences, she also noted that going travelling when older often equated to a lower tolerance for hardship and poorer living conditions.
Another respondent who had originally enjoyed feelings of freedom from the perceived mundane of everyday life later found that she needed the rhythm of routine in her life that being at home had provided her: “I always thought that I love being free and no rhythm and just work and travelling at anytime in any country, but I understand that in contrary, I need a structure for myself, like a rhythm” (Marie, French, 26). Furthermore, as noted in Section 6.6, Marie had once looked to travel as a means of addressing her problems, but eventually came to believe that travel would not provide any solutions. She believed some people deceived themselves into thinking they would find answers to existential questions through travel, when in actuality they were not to be found there. Lev (French/Israeli 30) agreed that while he had looked for answers through travel when he was younger, he had realised it had been a foolhardy search:

Maybe when I was younger, but I found, maybe when I was in Brazil, that travelling will not solve any problem about discovering your self because, there’s a song of Bob Marley when he sang, ‘you’re running and you’re running away, but you cannot run away from the self’.

Each of these respondents expressed doubt as to whether travel would play a critical role in their futures.

A few of the lifestyle travellers had also viewed focusing on one’s self through travel as a selfish exercise that was likely to be unsustainable. This point even further accentuated a tension that existed between one’s social duties to friends, peer groups and family, in contrast to one’s own selfish desires. In wondering aloud whether she might stop travelling one day, Jackie (English, 26) divulged:

I suppose you have to realise that in some ways travelling is quite irresponsible, isn’t it, because it doesn’t consider anybody else. That’s why you like it so much, because you can be entirely selfish. You don’t have anyone else to consider. So at some point, I suppose you have to stop being self-obsessed and self-centred and, I suppose, make a compromise that you won’t find that perfect place and the perfect people but just be happy that you’ve seen enough.

Thus, it was communicated that a ‘selfish’ lifestyle may not ultimately lead to ‘fulfilment’. However, most of the respondents were more idealistic and placed a high value on having freer space and time in the travel context to focus on self. A number of other lifestyle travellers expressed a desire to try to take the ideals of travel and integrate them into one’s life at home or a career.
6.7.2 Integrating travel into other areas of life

Several of the interviewees expressed a desire to integrate travel into their lives outside of the lifestyle travel context. For most, engagement in lifestyle travel had prevented the establishment of a conventional career and/or a family of their own. In order to eventually stomach the dominant social norm of being part of a productive workforce in their home societies, many felt it would be necessary to find an occupation that allowed for travel. On the other hand, Jackie (English, 26) continued her train of thought on when she might stop travelling in having noted that travel must end if one is to have a family:

That’s the question I’ve been asking myself. When will it stop? And now I don’t know. Hopefully, it’s not going to be forever. Because there’s certain things that you can’t do if you’re a traveller, like it’s difficult to have a serious relationship with someone, and at some point, I’d like to have a family. I would hope there’s going to be an end to it.

Rather than seeking to stop travelling entirely in order to take on the responsibilities of a family or a career, several respondents looked for ways to integrate travel into a more ‘secure’ lifestyle.

As Brendon (Irish, 26) suggested, it has become increasingly common to try to combine travel with one’s home society in a more fluid manner:

For a lot of people I’ve met as well who’ve travelled, the aim seems to be to kind of integrate it into your life, find a way to make it viable; instead of this stop/start thing, this huge separation between your country of origin or wherever you’re working, your economic base, your social, your family base, and then where you travel to, to try to get a synthesis between them. That seems to be a reoccurring theme.

While Brendon had hoped for more of an integration of travel into his life at home, he himself was still in the ‘stop/start’ cycle of travel that he had described. Much of the longing to combine travel and home life stemmed from the potentially undesirable cyclical nature of the travel lifestyle, which required most lifestyle travellers to return home periodically in order to work and save before once again travelling.

As Brendon hoped to continue learning about his self throughout his life and viewed travel as his best means of gaining self-knowledge, he also expressed a need to either continue travelling or to find a way transfer the excitement and ‘wonder’ of travel into his daily life at home. He had attributed positive self-change to his travels and hoped to avoid settling into a routine in Ireland where he believed his life would become static: “If you can transplant the
experience and the attitude [of travel] into your day to day, take what you’ve gone through, or take the sense of wonder and put it in the mundane….” Brendon trailed off during this quote as he contemplated whether he might have struck a solution in stemming his need to travel. By transferring his ‘travelling attitude’ into his life at home, he might continue what he felt was a dynamic path of self-development. One cannot help but wonder whether Brendon’s travelling attitude was more a reflection of a shared culture of travel that he had learned within the travel lifestyle. In this sense, Brendon would have been taking a cultural perspective of travel home with him to a place with a different sense of shared culture. As Sussman (2002) noted of reverse culture shock, a cultural clash that causes distress for the traveller returning home may arise. Thus, Brendon’s task may be more difficult than he realised.

However, the majority of the lifestyle travellers did not seek to bring an attitude of travel to their daily lives at home without the actual continued mobility of travel, but instead aimed to integrate travel into a career. In D’Andrea’s (2007a, p.220) study of transnational countercultural lifestyles, he found that some individuals that had become accustomed to a voluntarily nomadic life eventually sought to develop a career that allowed for a lifestyle related to “experiences of liberation, pleasure and expressivity.” Thus for both D’Andrea’s (2007a) study and the present work, highly mobile individuals sought to transfer feelings of freedom from travel into their future careers. Hence, whereas Riley (1988) noted that the majority of backpackers expected to rejoin the workforce in their home society and Sørensen (2003) and Westerhausen (2002) suggested that few viewed travel as a feasible indefinite alternative to a ‘normal’ career, several of the lifestyle travellers here sought occupational opportunities outside of the conventional workforces of their home societies. Yet, for many of the respondents, a discourse of self-development and reaching one’s unique potential was still present in their career aspirations.

Participants described not only financial pressure from their peer groups and family to head down a traditional career path, but also perceived an internal drive to achieve ‘something’ through occupation. This reflected the socially constructed narrative that one must ‘reach one’s highest potential’. Charlotte (Canadian, 26) described being torn between her desire to continue travel as a lifestyle and a feeling that she ‘ought to’ achieve something in the form of a career:

You have all these things holding you down, like finances, and the desire to succeed or to do well, or to achieve your highest potential. As much as I want to travel, I really want to do something where I can feel like I’ve achieved something. There is like this internal drive, to be motivated, to be your best.
Certainly, the action of shifting one’s lifestyle away from travel and to a career was not only based on one’s drive to succeed, but was also linked to the pressure of society to be productive within the workforce.

Several of the interviewees either felt the clock ticking to do something or were resigned to the unsustainability of their pursuits:

It usually takes about two weeks [at home] and then I feel the drive to go travelling again. And that’s when you go get a job, get new money, and you head back out again. And then you think I can’t do this for the rest of my life so that’s why I have my little dream that I want to start my own business, so instead I might be bring the tourists to me (Andreas, Swedish, 25).

As in Andreas’ case, some of the lifestyle travellers hoped for careers that would allow them to travel or to work directly in tourism. While Adam (Israeli, 25) endeavoured to return home and study to be a tour guide, Kat (Australian, 30) had described finding personal rewards through her work in indigenous law that allowed her to travel long-term on a regular basis:

I wanted to be able to do work in places where I could learn a lot more about people and culture through the work that I was doing. In terms of travel as a lifestyle, I feel like I’ve totally hit the jackpot with this line of work.

Also noticeable in Kat’s words was that while she may now travel through work, she has still continued a mode of learning about the world and her self through travel, regardless of whether the context was leisure travel or work-related. Kat’s lifestyle challenged the industrial revolution’s entrenchment of a firm work/leisure divide from which escape may be needed in order to ‘re-create’ or experience recreation (Veal & Lynch 2001).

6.7.3 Continuing to travel indefinitely

While the above respondents envisioned themselves either ceasing or altering the structure of their travels, a significant number of the respondents intended to continue travelling as a lifestyle for the indefinite future. As Steph (Australian, 23) had described of her intentions to continue travelling indefinitely:
I was looking for somewhere to fit in the world, I think, and by travelling I could, I don’t know, maybe, find it somewhere else and now I’m happy exploring and I fit in wherever I am. I’m happy with my self so it’s different now. I don’t think I’ll ever get sick of it [travelling]; I think I’ll continue to do it for the rest of my lifetime. I get antsy when I have to stay in one place for more than three months at a time. Whether or not that will die down after a while, I don’t know.

Thus, it seemed that Steph had found lifestyle travel to be rewarding in terms of her ongoing personal search for self. For the respondents who intended to travel for the foreseeable future, they mostly suggested that travel was ‘their nature’ and had or was becoming an important part of their ideas of self. As Fiona (New Zealander, 23) stated in regards to her future: “I want travelling to be part of my identity. I hope to keep travelling forever. I don’t know about money, but I’m going to have to find a way.”

Justification for why individuals would continue to travel in the future ranged through addiction to travel, a perceived inability to reintegrate into a different lifestyle in their home societies and, for individuals such as Kat, an experience of ongoing happiness and meaning derived from a travel lifestyle. Marie (French, 26), who was largely critical of the travel lifestyle, did believe it was possible for travel itself to become a primary part of one’s self after an extended period of time.

When you are doing for a long time, for I don’t know, ten or twenty years travelling, it’s become part of your identity also. So, it’s not anymore a runaway or something, or find your identity, it’s become part of your identity travelling for ten years, fifteen years, it’s become part of your self.

Interestingly, Marie’s comment led to the notion that a sense of self largely based around travel might serve to trap an individual within a travel lifestyle, which, ironically, may counteract the feelings of freedom travel has been said to provide.

Furthermore, it was argued that to travel could be perceived as one’s ‘nature’, especially if it had been a regular process since childhood. This appeared to be the case for Tamara (Canadian/Indian, 34), whose family travelled with her regularly for months at a time since when she was young:

From when I was born to right to today, there is no year that there hasn’t been movement, there is no year that there doesn’t involve a few countries. So, it’s like, this type of movement and constant change is very much a part of me and my life and my lifestyle, and I don’t even know in a sense different.

For these few individuals who believed that it was their nature to travel, they largely expressed a growing commitment to lifestyle travel. As Ryan (Australian, 48) assured:
“Travel has always been a significant part of who and what I am and in fact the older I get it seems to be going to increase rather than decrease.” It may also be possible that some of these individuals had become so accustomed to a traveller way of life that a long-term return to their home societies would have been difficult (Sussman 2002) or even unfeasible due to belief system conflicts and/or habituated alternative styles of living. Alec (Scottish, 34), after seventeen years of travel himself, conjectured: “I think if you travel long enough, there comes a point in time where you’re probably going to struggle to reintegrate into Western society.” Wilson (2006) also noted that a correlation existed between the length of time an individual had been away travelling and the difficulty she/he may have experienced in adjusting upon returning home.

One other viewpoint offered by (AdamIsraeli, 25) compared the long-term act of repeated travel to a form of drug addiction: “I think there’s no end to it, so in that case you can call it a drug addiction. The world is huge and you can travel all your life and not see the whole thing.” Notably, Adam identified with adrenalin-seeking as one of the main reasons why he travelled.

For others, continuing to travel was identified as critical to an ongoing quest that could not be abandoned, and also as the establishment of a lifestyle that afforded the individual meaning and happiness. For Barry (English, 32), travel was constructed as part of a search for both a suitable partner and for some other unknown that he perceived he was missing:

I think there is a certain amount of inner peace I’m trying to find. I’m always going to be searching because I do think I’m missing something and I don’t know what it is and I’ll know when I find it, and I will keep travelling as long as it makes me happy and as long as I think there’s something out there.

Barry did not directly identify with the concept of searching for self, but as was stated earlier in regards to the possible psychological danger associated with admitting one was lost, it was likely that Barry was unconsciously engaging in a search for self nonetheless.

Finally, Max (English, 40) characterised his travels as the development of an appropriate lifestyle for him that had provided meaning and happiness:

What’s really developed is my real lifestyle, rather than what I have to do to support it. If I didn’t have to work, I would be travelling all the time. I really enjoy travelling, and I keep doing it. So, if I can get enjoyment out of my life, and to me that is giving it meaning, isn’t it? That’s meaning in itself, that’s a reason to get up every day.
Max attested to being satisfied with the act of travel itself as a provider of meaning and enjoyment, a statement that was consistent with Welk’s (2004, p.90) comment that, for some, travelling “is not supposed to serve any goals beyond travelling itself.” However, a portion of the other respondents that intended to continue travel as a lifestyle did not seem to be satisfied with travel as an act in its own right.

6.7.4 Looking for a new place to call home

Several respondents described switching from previously searching for self, to later looking for a suitable environment to match their constructed idea of who they were. Thus, several of the lifestyle travellers were using their travels as a means of searching for a new place to call home. These individuals and the lifestyle travellers above who planned to continue searching through their travels might also be identified as ‘eternal seekers’, as suggested by Cohen (1979). Lifestyle travellers in search of a new place to call home described looking for somewhere that was aesthetically pleasing, provided a positive sense of community and largely matched their value and belief systems. This unknown place was conceptualised as ‘non-toxic’ when positioned in comparison to the perceived ‘toxicity’ of some of the respondents’ home societies. The use of ‘toxic’ in description of a society, as in Kat’s (Australian, 30) words below, reflected theoretical work on anomie (Dann 1977, Roberts 1978), further justifying that many of the other respondents viewed their home societies as anomic.

Many of the interviewees held high expectations of how pleasing a location would have to be in order for them to settle down there. This may be due to some of the respondents having perceived a firmer sense of self, and as such, held particular ideas about what type of environment would be appropriate for them in the long-term. The search for a new home in this case was reminiscent of utopian visions spawned by More’s (1516) Utopia, which had a filtered influence on countercultural youth in the 1960s and 70s who followed the overland track from Europe to India and Nepal in search of an earthly utopia (MacLean 2006).

For some of the travellers, the search for somewhere new to live had followed a process of shunning their own society, undergoing perceived self-change and looking for a new environment that matched their adjusted conception of self. Thomas (English, 29) who had portrayed his departure from England as permanent and self-designed remarked: “I’ve kind of opted out of the society in which I grew up in, and haven’t found the one to settle in and I think that’s what’s motivating me.” Kat (Australian, 30) remarked that one must not only
escape a toxic home environment, but also find somewhere long-term outside of the home environment that was of a more ‘positive’ nature:

If you’re in an environment which is toxic to you, like when I was a corporate lawyer, that environment was toxic to me. So I think that if you’re in a toxic environment, it’s also about putting yourself in a geographic environment where it’s not toxic and you can have that space. So it’s not necessarily just being free from pressures, it’s actually sometimes about going to a good place where there’s good people and good energy.

From this perspective, even if one perceived that a firmer sense of self had been achieved through travel, it may have proved difficult to return to one’s home society and to have maintained this feeling. Thus, some of the respondents may elect to eventually expatriate.

Of the few respondents that did describe a search for somewhere new to live, most also portrayed themselves as having already achieved a firmer sense of self, such as Tamara (Canadian/Indian 34):

I actually feel quite solid in my self and so I’m actually seeking an external that matches the internal. That sounds really arrogant, but you know, that’s probably the truth of it. I feel like I know what’s important to me, what life is, what energy is harmonious for me, what elements I need, and I feel like I’m moving, or I’m seeking to find that place that I can have a base.

Through feeling stronger about who they were, the respondents often expressed having developed fixed ideas about what a new home would entail. It was depicted as being difficult to find an appropriate location to match one’s revised conception of self:

I think you become more definite about who you are and therefore, you don’t want to change. So you have to find somewhere where you fit in as you are, rather than when you’re younger you go somewhere and you change yourself so that you fit in. But now, it has to be somewhere where you fit in just as you are. And that’s more difficult because when you become more certain about who you are it’s more difficult to change (Jackie, English, 26).

Thomas (English, 29) related that finding somewhere that matched his idea of self required the discovery of not only a beautiful and ‘natural’ location, but also a place that provided a firm sense of community:

That’s the most important thing for me, it isn’t just to find the most aesthetically pleasing place, but to find somewhere where there’s a community spirit, where I feel like you can actually live there and have friends and a family there too.
Thomas was searching for a community that shared his values towards work/life balances, materiality and other value stances largely common to lifestyle travel. Since his interview, Thomas has settled on a remote island off Cambodia where he has purchased a small-scale budget bungalow resort. However, for most of the lifestyle travellers, a life of external mobility continued. Finding an imaginary utopia seemed to be a challenging process, and it was likely that many would compromise and find an end to their travels for various personal reasons through the course of time. Until then, some of the lifestyle travellers maintained hopes that an extraordinary place would be found:

It would have to be something really extraordinary, like I’d have to go to a place and think it was really amazing or meet people who I thought were really fantastic and that would be the only thing that would make me empty out my backpack once and for all. At the moment, I haven’t found that (Jackie, English, 26).

In Sharpley and Sundaram’s (2005) research on ashram tourism, they reported that a number of ‘permanent tourists’ had settled in southern India in the town of Auroville, where an enduring community of foreigners have developed a community there based on ‘utopian ideals’. Perhaps, it may take a place like Auroville, where the dominant resident culture may hold similar values to many of this study’s lifestyle travellers, in order to eventually entice an end to a few of the respondents’ wanderings.

While some of the interviewees had become increasing jaded with the travel lifestyle and no longer viewed travel as a vehicle for finding answers to life’s questions, others had been impacted by the wear and tear of the travel lifestyle as they had aged. Social pressures such as the drive to have a family and pursue a conventional career also contributed to a lower involvement in lifestyle travel. Others sought a means of integrating a travel attitude into their lives at home or a career that allowed them to travel regularly. Alternatively, some of the respondents continued to travel happily, either satisfied with travel as a meaningful lifestyle in its own right, or still searching for something more, whether it be knowledge of self, a partner, a feeling of community or a utopian paradise.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has interpreted the various perspectives that the lifestyle travellers held on the role of searching for self in their travels. While the search for self was often characterised in different ways, such as an ongoing process of learning about, getting to know and/or taking care of the self or having ultimately found one’s self, a common theme was that most of the
lifestyle travellers were seeking self as an inner object that could be found and developed. Thus, many of the lifestyle travellers were or had been on a Romantic modern quest of searching for their true self. Although many of the respondents had hoped to experience their true self, the concept of existential authenticity did not emerge directly as an important theme in discussions with the participants as issues relating to existential authenticity were instead voiced by the respondents using a vocabulary of self.

Several of the lifestyle travellers addressed issues of self by narrating perceived positive self-changes as a result of their travels. Furthermore, the process of searching for self had varied in importance for some of the lifestyle travellers over time, with many having perceived their search to have been more intense during their earlier travels, which had been linked to a ‘developmental process’ of becoming a ‘mature adult’. In contrast, a number of other respondents actively sought self-development throughout the course of their lifetimes. Moreover, while for some searching for self had been a lucid goal, for others searching was described as an unconscious background process that had taken place subtly and ‘naturally’.

In terms of how successful the lifestyle travellers who had been searching for self perceived themselves in their respective searches, only a few of the respondents directly laid claim to having successfully gained a firmer sense of self. Others described their search for self as an ongoing process, whereas a few of the respondents openly admitted to having felt increasingly lost as a result of lifestyle travel. Hence, while searching for self seems to be commonly undertaken in lifestyle travel, for some individuals, their sense of self may become more problematic through the travel context. Lastly, the chapter delved into the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers, as their intentions for the future varied through an anticipated decrease in engagement in lifestyle travel, attempts to integrate travel into one’s home life or career, the continuance of lifestyle travel indefinitely and, for a few, shifting the aim of their travels towards finding a suitable, yet seemingly elusive, environment in which to settle.
Chapter Seven – Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

As its main research objective, this study has investigated the question – What is the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers? Linked to this main research question, three key aims have been addressed. These included: (1) identifying the meanings that lifestyle travellers attach to the search for self, (2) identifying issues surrounding the search for self that may influence why individuals travel as a lifestyle and (3) considering the future travel intentions of lifestyle travellers and how their intentions may be influenced by the search for self. Set within the context of lifestyle travellers encountered during fieldwork in northern India and southern Thailand from July through September 2007, Chapters Five and Six presented empirical findings directed by the main research question and its associated aims. The intention of the present chapter is to summarise how the aims of the thesis have been met and draw out the implications of the findings in the context of the broader academic literature. As such, the chapter begins by summarising how the aims have been addressed. The implications of these findings and the consequent contributions to academic knowledge are then detailed. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided before concluding with a final remark.

7.2 Meeting the research aims

In order to demonstrate how each of the three key aims of the thesis has been met, this section is divided into three parts as per the respective aims cited in Section 1.5:

1) To identify the meanings that lifestyle travellers attach to the search for self.

Chapter Six interpreted findings directly related to the meanings that the lifestyle travellers attached to the search for self through their travels. Throughout the discussions in Chapter Six, the literature on self that was reviewed in Chapter Two was considered in light of the interviewees’ responses. Chapter Six stressed that in one form or another, the search for self was voiced as a critical motivating factor for the majority of the lifestyle travellers. The narrations of the lifestyle travellers, however, contained multiple perspectives on how the search for self was conceived and approached. Primarily, the lifestyle travellers differed on
When during their travels self-searching had been perceived as taking place, whether their respective searches had been lucid or a subtle background process and how successful each respondent judged her/himself in the search for self.

While the search for self was often characterised through phrases such as ‘learning about/getting to know the self’, ‘taking care of the self’ and/or ‘finding one’s self’, a common thread among most of the respondents was that self was viewed as an internal object that could be developed. Thus, many of the respondents had been or were still on a Romantic modern quest of searching for their true self. The implications of this result in reference to the widely accepted academic viewpoint that the notion of a ‘true self’ is a historical construction is critically examined under the implications of the study in Section 7.3. But for the moment, it is preferable to remain focused on the perspectives of the respondents.

It would be inaccurate to portray all of the lifestyle travellers as ardent pilgrims on a quest to find her/his essential inner self. There were many levels of complexity as to the role of searching for self for each of the respondents. For one, the process of searching for self had varied in importance over time for several of the lifestyle travellers, with many having perceived their searching to have been more intense during their earlier travels, at a time in which they would have arguably been transitioning from a childhood identity to an adult identity (Cote & Levine 2002). On the other hand, several of the respondents attested to actively searching for self throughout the course of their travels. Furthermore, while some of the lifestyle travellers had overtly or lucidly searched for self, others instead perceived searching as an unconscious background process that took place subtly and ‘naturally’. For these latter respondents, the search for self was often narrated in terms of perceived positive self-change, a process that had also been remarked upon by Noy (2004).

Finally, as to how successful the interviewees perceived themselves in terms of their respective searches, only a couple of the respondents directly laid claim to having gained a firmer sense of self. For these respondents, cosmopolitanism, as selective appropriation from the world’s cultural forms (Hannerz 2002), here fomented through the vehicle of lifestyle travel, seemed to characterise their perceptions that they had formed a coherent sense of self. However, most instead described the search for self as an ongoing process with which they were still involved to varying degrees.

In contrast, a few of the respondents openly divulged having felt increasingly lost as a result of lifestyle travel as they described searching for ‘something’ without finding any answers. In this latter instance, it seemed that rather than developing a more secure sense of self, prolonged exposure to a variety of cultural praxes may have served in the opposite manner, resulting in a confused sense of self for the individual (Gergen 1991). For these
latter lifestyle travellers, the old cliché of ‘finding one’s self’ through travel did not prove so straightforward. It seems that multiphrenia (splitting of the individual into multiple self-investments) (Gergen 1991), likely engendered by lifestyle travel, did not result in feelings of liberation, as postmodern theory might have suggested (Seigel 2005), but was instead experienced as identity confusion, which is reminiscent of Erikson’s (1968) description of an ‘identity crisis’.

Thus, while searching for self seems to be commonly undertaken in lifestyle travel, for some individuals, maintaining a coherent sense of self may become increasingly problematic through the travel context. Alongside findings on how the lifestyle travellers attached meaning to the search for self, the respondents cited several key themes that not only influenced self-searching, but also more generally affected their motivations for travelling as a lifestyle. The identification and discussion of these themes constituted the second aim of the thesis.

2) To identify issues surrounding the search for self that may influence why individuals travel as a lifestyle.

The lifestyle travellers identified three primary themes linked to the search for self, which also influenced why they travelled as a lifestyle. The themes included escapism, freedom and learning through challenge. In regards to escapism, many of the interviewees did not directly link escape to the search for self, but instead focused on the need to avoid perceived anomie aspects of Western society. In addition to voicing the need to generally escape aspects of their home societies, many of the respondents cited a desire to escape from the mundane routine of everyday life, social pressures from family and peer groups and failed aspects of their personal lives back home. Several of the lifestyle travellers felt that escapism had played a significant role in why they had first decided to go travelling, and for some, why they continued to travel. However, a few of the respondents also identified that escape had played a lessening role in their travels over time and that they no longer perceived a need to escape from their home societies.

Several of the respondents believed that it was necessary to escape in order to be able to search for self. Thus, searching for self was described as a process that could take place more easily outside of one’s home society. In this light, it was commonly noted that in order to escape from something, one must escape to something. Rather than directly focus on escape as a means of gaining space and time to search for self, the majority of the respondents
instead focused on escaping to an environment where they could experience a higher degree of freedom.

Hence, a Romantic vision of freedom emerged as the most commonly voiced theme in the study. Many of the lifestyle travellers who did not mention escape as a travel motivation instead spoke in depth about how seeking freedom played a primary role in why they travelled as a lifestyle. Several of the respondents described not having consciously sought freedom through travel prior to their going away, but instead perceived increased freedom as a critical attractor to lifestyle travel once on the road. Although, for a few of the interviewees, freedom had reportedly become less important through the course of their travels as they attested to being able to experience freedom in most aspects of their lives, not just in the travel context. In contrast to the majority of the respondents, however, a few of the interviewees openly expressed cynicism towards the notion of freedom through travel as they cited the socially and industrially constructed nature of travel experiences. Nonetheless, increased free time and free space were depicted by many of the respondents as allowing for ‘elbow room’ from their home societies in which to search for self. Thus, the experience of freedom was depicted as a critical prerequisite in the search for self as freedom supposedly acted as a baseline requirement in allowing time and space to perceive learning about the self.

Therefore, many of the lifestyle travellers sought escape in order to experience increased freedom, which included a freedom to search for self. Yet, perceived freedom not only functioned for many as a prerequisite in the search for self, but also reportedly gave individuals increased opportunities for engagement in challenging situations offered through travel. Challenging situations were depicted by several of the lifestyle travellers as opportunities for self-testing and self-development, through which one might learn about the external world, and in turn, one’s self. As such, several of the respondents professed a blurring between what one learned about the world through travel and what one learned about one’s self. Extreme or challenging situations were portrayed by some as potentially rewarding moments in the search for self during which travel functioned as a form of education.

Challenging moments in which one might learn about one’s self, while related to facing the unknown and testing one’s boundaries, were not however, linked to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) concept of flow experience. Most of the lifestyle travellers did not feel that they were seeking flow experience through their travels and did not equate challenging situations during travel with flow experience. Hence, while flow experience has commonly been used as a tool to explain leisure participation (see for instance Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 1988, 1990, 1997,
Priest & Bunting 1993, Stein et al. 1995), in the context of lifestyle travel flow experience did not prove to be a useful explanatory tool.

Additionally, the concept of existential authenticity did not represent the voices of the lifestyle travellers in this study. While many of the respondents may have hoped to learn about and experience their true self through travel, the respondents preferred to voice their self-seeking behaviour using a discourse of self rather than existential authenticity. The implications for tourism scholarship of existential authenticity having emerged here as a redundant explanatory tool are discussed in Section 7.3. The current section now turns to how the final aim of the study was addressed, which involved a consideration of the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers.

3) To consider the future travel intentions of lifestyle travellers and how these intentions may be influenced by the search for self.

Finally, four primary themes emerged as to the future travel intentions of the lifestyle travellers. For some, increasing age had been associated with a desire for more comfort and security, as well as cynicism towards the potential of travel to answer questions about the self. For these individuals, waning travel motivation preceded an anticipated decrease in engagement or end of participation in lifestyle travel. A second theme was to try to transfer the feelings afforded by travel into one’s everyday life at home or to integrate travel into one’s career. However, to transfer the values and praxes of travel outside of its cultural contexts was deemed likely to spur a cultural clash (Sussman 2002).

A third theme was that several of the respondents intended to keep travelling indefinitely, as they had been, as they had either come to perceive travel as a source of happiness, a part of their conception of self, as an ongoing quest for ‘answers’ that could not be abandoned and/or anticipated that a reintegration with their home society would not be plausible. Finally, a significant number of the lifestyle travellers depicted having switched from previously searching for self, to later looking for a new place to call home. As some respondents described searching for an ideal environment that matched their adjusted conceptions of self, their ambitions reflected a utopian vision.

7.3 Implications for and contributions to academic knowledge

The above findings have several implications for and contributions to academic knowledge. Whilst the thesis has made minor contributions directly to the literatures on self,
escapism, freedom, challenge and authenticity, its more useful contribution related to these areas has been to afford more evidence as to how these discourses are mobilised in a tourism context. The largest contribution of the thesis to academic knowledge, however, has been to fill the void surrounding individuals who travel as a way of life by having conceptualised lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research and having conducted the first empirical research with these individuals.

In regards to the contributions that the thesis has made to the literature on self, and in particular, how discourses of self are played out in a tourism context, the study has supported tourism scholarship that has cited self as critical to the travel experience (Anderskov 2002, Davidson 2005, Desforges 2000, Neumann 1992, Noy 2004, O’Reilly C.C. 2005, 2006, Richards & Wilson 2004c). Moreover, Noy’s (2004) assertion that issues of self underlay narrations of perceived personal changes was also substantiated through the present work. A significant point of departure, however, that differentiates the thesis from the above research, is the effort that has been taken here to highlight the inner self as a historically situated social construction (Baumeister 1986, 1991, Beedie 2007, Danziger 1997, Foucault 1988, McAdams 1997, Seigel 2005).

Whereas the majority of the lifestyle travellers in this study searched for an essentialist self that could be actualised or developed, the now dominant opposing sociological view that selves are relational and situational (Danziger 1997, Finnegan 1997) precludes the actual experiencing of an inner self. Without an inner or true self to actualise, realise, transform, find, and/or develop, many of the lifestyle travellers can be seen as chasing an illusion. This common conundrum of searching for an inner self that is a historically constructed myth indicates that many of the lifestyle travellers had internalised a modern view of self as a developmental project, a theme that still pervades much of Western society and has materialised as a problematic modern quest for self (Baumeister 1986).

Despite a critical view of the inner self as a social construction, Elsrud’s (2001, p.599) words resonate: “Statements from interviews will demonstrate that no matter how much academic knowledge is extracted from their testimonies, their experiences are as valid and real to them as the construction is to the researcher.” So even though the pursuit of one’s true self may be fruitless in an ‘objective’ sense, it should not be overlooked that the search for self held meaning and importance for many of the respondents. Alongside the lifestyle travellers that viewed the self as an internal object, this thesis has highlighted that there has also been tourism scholarship that has rested on the assumption that an inner self exists.

While research concerning self within tourism studies seems to have largely worked either with an idea of self as an actualisable object or as relational and fluid, the studies have
rarely explained their assumptions about self. Such an oversight can be problematic when the research has premised part of its contribution on the existence on an inner self, such as studies espousing promises of self-actualisation, self-realisation, self-fulfilment, discovering one’s self, finding one’s self and, amongst others, self-development (see for instance Cohen 1996, Neumann 1992, Richards & King 2003). The most considerable recent body of scholarship within tourism that rests on the notion of a true inner self, however, is the discourse on existential authenticity.

Seigel (2005, p.44) highlighted, “Beginning, as some authors do, from a lament for an earlier and lost kind of ‘authentic’ or ‘genuine’ self, or a vision of some kind of return to it on a higher level, is to become prisoner to a mirage.” As the core of existential authenticity depends on experiencing one’s true self (Wang 1999) and existing “according to one’s nature or essence” (Steiner & Reisinger 2006, p.303), existential authenticity loses its meaning in the context of relational selves. Furthermore, this lack of substance to the concept of existential authenticity, combined with authenticity having been redundant in the present study, questions altogether the value of existential authenticity to tourism theory. Perhaps, like Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p.80) have suggested of objective and constructive authenticity, existential authenticity should also be abandoned within tourism research.

Returning to the implications for the broader literature of the lifestyle traveller’s views on self, several of the respondents provided support to the literature that has conceptualised self as being increasingly problematic in late modernity (Baumeister 1986, 1991, Gergen 1991, Giddens 1991, Hall 1996, Lanfant 1995, McAdams 1997). On one hand, a couple of the lifestyle travellers reflected the notion of travel as a potential vehicle for the construction of a cosmopolitan sense of self (Hannerz 1990, 2002, O’Reilly 2006), as these individuals attested to having gained a firmer sense of self from among the various cultural praxes through which they had toured. Towards the other side of a spectrum, however, several of the respondents became increasingly lost in the search for self through the course of their travels, perhaps indicating travel as a paradoxical means of answering questions about self. This latter finding was consistent with Iso-Ahola’s (1980) observation that too many options can become confusing as opposed to liberating. Therefore, rather than representing Urry’s (2002) post-tourist, for which travel is mainly play and progress is not necessary, the majority of the lifestyle travellers portrayed a serious quest for meaning through their travels as it was common for the respondents to use the self as a sense-making device (Kuentzel 2000).

In regards to the implications of the study derived from its engagement with discourses of escape, freedom and challenge, the thesis has made contributions in each of these areas. First, escapism was supported as a push factor and important tourism motivator (Crompton
Furthermore, the study empirically justified Cohen and Taylor’s (1992) assertion that escape attempts can be underpinned by the search for one’s perceived true self. Also, while Maoz (2004) had noted that estrangement from one’s home society was a less central theme to most modern backpackers, the finding that lifestyle travellers largely felt estranged from their home societies, and thus often desired to escape, lent further justification to lifestyle travellers as different from the backpacking ‘norm’.

The study also supported tourism literature that has positioned the idea of freedom as a pull factor (Anderskov 2002, Ateljevic & Doorne 2004, Jamieson 1996, Riley 1988, White & White 2004). Although a few of the lifestyle travellers noted the travel experience as a socially and industrially constructed environment, these individuals, along with the rest of the interviewees, still valued life on the road as providing a higher degree of freedom than they perceived in their home societies. This finding further justified Veal and Lynch’s (2001, p.22) wider suggestion that “freedom is relative, not absolute,” and that the perception of freedom, or the belief that one is free, is vitally important to leisure and tourism experiences (Iso-Ahola 1980, Neulinger 1981). Moreover, the roles of both escape and freedom in motivating the respondents to travel justified travel as driven by both push and pull factors (Riley 1988) and supported tourism as both avoidance and seeking (Iso-Ahola 1982).

As for the role of challenge in lifestyle travel, the findings reflected the notion that perceived self-insight or knowledge can be judged as gained through the negotiation of challenging situations in a travel context (Walle 1997, Weber 2001) and Wang’s (1999) observation that some individuals search for travel experiences that can lead to a ‘trial of the self’. This confirmed Elsrud’s (2001) observation that a ‘risk and adventure narrative’ is present among travellers. Also, the finding that flow experience was not a relevant explanatory tool in the case of lifestyle travellers suggested limitations to the applicability of flow experience in the tourism context and at a lifestyle level of analysis (contrary to Macbeth’s 1988 proposition). Finally, the widespread belief among the lifestyle travellers of the self as an object to be developed, along with their Romantic views on escape, freedom and challenge, should all be understood as influenced by the rhetoric of resistance and values of the 1960s counterculture, and before that, from the transcendentalists of the Romantic period for whom a perceived conflict with society directed the search for fulfilment ‘outside’ of the mainstream social order (Baumeister 1986).

The intended future directions of the respondents also contributed to tourism scholarship. Both Wilson’s (2006) observation that going travelling when older can equate to a lower tolerance for hardship and poorer living conditions and D’Andrea’s (2007a) suggestion that individuals that have become accustomed to a voluntary nomadic life often
seek to transfer feelings of freedom from travel into their future careers were empirically supported. Furthermore, Sussman’s (2002) and Wilson’s (2006) idea that an individual that has travelled long-term may struggle to reinte grate into their home society due to belief system conflicts was substantiated through the present research. The research also illustrated that there are individuals such as those that Cohen (1979) called ‘eternal seekers’, as several of the lifestyle travellers either intended to continue searching for self indefinitely or, in some cases, for an ideal environment that might match their adjusted conceptions of self.

Finally, the most valuable contribution of the thesis to academic knowledge has been to fill a void in tourism studies surrounding individuals who travel as a way of life by having conceptualised lifestyle travellers as an identifiable corpus for research and having conducted the first empirical research directly with these individuals. It has been suggested that there is a dearth of empirical work with tourists ‘in the flesh’ as few academic studies have investigated tourists’ views on “what travel means to them” (Desforges 2000, p.931). Desforges (2000) noted that the result has been a ‘top down’ approach that has tended to misrepresent the meanings that tourists may assign to experiences. Not only has this thesis engaged with tourists face-to-face regarding the meanings they assign to their travel experiences, but it is also the first study aimed at specifically investigating the experiences of individuals that travel as a lifestyle.

Whilst it has been noted that there are under-researched niches within the backpacker market (Nash 2001, Sørensen 2003) and there is a lack of information on ‘contemporary drifters’ (Cohen 2004), it has also been claimed that such ‘lifelong wanderers’ are difficult to locate and consequently, have rarely been the subject of research (Noy & Cohen 2005). As the term ‘lifestyle traveller’ is reflective of Cohen’s (2004) ‘contemporary drifters’ and Noy and Cohen’s (2005) ‘lifelong wanderers’, the present research has been a significant step in beginning to address this research gap. Indeed, twenty-five lifestyle travellers were identified and interviewed during the fieldwork for this research, with the respondents averaging three years of experience with travel as their lifestyle, including three individuals that had travelled for approximately seventeen years.

‘Lifestyle traveller’ has been suggested in this thesis as a less pejorative phrase than ‘drifter’ or ‘wanderer’ to describe individuals who repeatedly return to long-term travel and consider travel to be their way of life. While non-derogative, the term ‘lifestyle traveller’ also serves to situate individuals that travel as a way of life as a sub-type within the broader stream of backpackers. Further to this conceptual addition, as the first empirical study of lifestyle travellers, this is also the only research that has focused on individuals that have taken multiple extended trips, as previous research into ‘long-term travellers’ has used a single
minimum period of travel, such as the one-year used by Riley (1988) and Elsrud (2001). As such, the thesis is also unique in that it specifically offers the perspectives of travellers that have had the opportunity to reflect on their trips outside of the travel context and have elected to return to a travel lifestyle.

7.4 Future research directions

While there have been a number of significant insights resulting from this study, it has also raised several questions that should be the subject of future research. Even though the research question and its associated aims have been addressed, Hollinshead (2004, p.73) has noted that “almost all qualitative analyses can only ever be partial, and therefore open-ended, forms of inquiry; many researchers believe they can only ever yield ‘findings’ tentatively held, and never ‘results’ firmly concluded.” Thus, the present findings could be expanded upon in a number of ways.

Although it was prevented here by time and funding limitations, a longitudinal study into the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers would be an interesting path of inquiry. A longitudinal study of face-to-face interviews with lifestyle travellers followed by telephone and/or electronic communication several years later would allow for further investigation into whether the role of the search for self and the meanings that the individual assigned to lifestyle travel had changed over time. Thus, it would provide the opportunity to compare the individual’s previously stated future travel intentions with actual outcomes. For instance, did the respondent continue engagement in lifestyle travel or had she/he elected another way of life?

Additionally, since this study of lifestyle travellers is contextualised and thus, cannot be claimed as directly representative of wider populations (O’Reilly K. 2005), another fruitful line of research would be to investigate the role of the search for self for lifestyle travellers in places other than India and Thailand. While the present research has not focused on place, as the inquiry was directed generally at the respondents’ perceptions of the search for self in the context of their wider travels, research in other places might still result in lifestyle travellers there attaching different meanings to their experiences. A further potential area for study that has been raised in this thesis is the increasingly interwoven status of Western and Eastern understandings of self. Indeed, further research into how lifestyle travellers utilise the discourses surrounding Orientalism in constituting notions of self derived from Other would be useful.
Finally, another idea that deserves further research is to investigate how lifestyle travellers conceptualise ‘home’. Since Hannerz (2002) has suggested that the concept of home has become increasingly blurred in late modernity as individuals split their attention and presence between places, qualitative inquiry among lifestyle travellers, who have invested their time and interest between various locations over many years, would be likely to provide further insights into changing perceptions of home. Indeed, a blurring of home began to emerge as an issue among these lifestyle travellers as the traditional centrality of place in defining home became problematic.

7.5 Final remark

Even though the present research is only directly representative of its specific context, the findings can have meaning and relevance in and beyond other situations involving lifestyle travellers. Although lifestyle travellers only represent a small, and arguably extreme, proportion of tourists, the choice to travel voluntarily as a lifestyle and, for many, to seek a coherent sense of self amid an increasing array of life choices, may be indicative of broader sociological trends in contemporary Western societies. Eriksen (2007, p.92) has noted: “Although it sounds hyperbolic to say that ‘we are all on the move,’ it is true in several senses that movement is characteristic of contemporary globalization”. Albeit lifestyle travellers exercise mobility as a way of life, it is not farfetched to suggest that the roles of the search for self and the meanings that lifestyle travellers ascribed to their travel experiences may become increasingly relevant patterns for broader sections of society as mobility and exposure to varied cultural praxes, whether voluntary or not, becomes more commonplace. Indeed, Graburn (1983, p.29) suggested:

Styles of tourism may be leading indicators of fundamental changes which are taking place in a class or national culture, changes which may be latent in the more restricting institutions of the everyday world, because tourism is that short section of life in which people believe they are free to exercise their fantasies, to challenge their physical and cultural selves, and to expand their horizons.

Despite the fact that this study has highlighted the historically and socially constructed underpinnings of many of the ideals of tourism to which Graburn (1983) alluded, this does not mean that lifestyle travellers have necessarily stopped seeking and believing.
Bibliography


Barrow, R. 1980, Happiness, Martin Robertson, Oxford

Bauman, Z. 1988, Freedom, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis


Berger, P.L. 1973, “‘Sincerity” and “Authenticity” in Modern Society’, *The Public Interest*, no.31, 81-90


Carden, A.R. 2006, ‘Sign of the Times: An Examination of the Self-Concept and Emotional Motivation of Travelers on Route 66 (1926-Present)’, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol.20, no.2, 51-61


Cherryholmes, C.H. 1992, ‘Notes on Pragmatism and Scientific Realism’, *Educational Researcher*, vol.21, no.6, 13-17


Cleck, P. 1983, America’s Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s, Oxford University Press, New York


Cook, I. 1998, “‘You want to be careful you don’t end up like Ian. He’s all over the place’: Autobiography in/of an Expanded Field (the director’s cut),” *University of Sussex Research Papers in Geography No. 34.*, viewed 25 June 2008, www.gees.bham.ac.uk/downloads/gesdraftpapers/iancook-directorscut.htm


Crang, M. 2003, ‘Qualitative Methods: Touchy, Feely, Look-see?’, *Progress in Human Geography*, vol.27, no.4, 494-504


Crompton, J. 1979, ‘Motivations for Pleasure Vacation’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol.6, no.4, 408-424


Erickson, R.J. 1995, ‘The Importance of Authenticity for Self and Society’, Symbolic Interaction, vol.18, no.2, 121-144


Foucault, M. 1989, *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)*, Semiotext(e), New York


Hall, C.M. 2005, ‘Reconsidering the Geography of Tourism and Contemporary Mobility’, *Geographical Research*, vol.43, no.2, 125-139


Harrison, J. 2003, Being a Tourist: Finding Meaning in Pleasure Travel, UBC Press, Vancouver


Heidegger, M. 1962, Being and Time, SCM Press, London


Jackson, S.A. 1992, ‘Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Figure Skaters’, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol.4, 161-180


Kelner, S. 2001, Narrative Construction of Authenticity in Pilgrimage Touring, 96th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, California, August 19th

Kerouac, J. 1957, On the Road, Penguin, New York


Law, L., Bunnell, T. and Ong, C. 2007, ‘The Beach, the Gaze and Film Tourism’, *Tourist Studies*, vol.7, no.2, 141-164


Lengfelder, J. and Timothy, D.J. 2000, ‘Leisure Time in the 1990s and Beyond: Cherished Friend or Incessant Foe?’, *Visions in Leisure and Business*, vol.19, no.1, 13-26


MacLean, R. 2006, Magic Bus: On the Hippie Trail from Istanbul to India, Viking, London


Metcalf, B. 1995, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney


Patton, M.Q. 2002, Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks


Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L. 2004, ‘Progress in Qualitative Research in Tourism: Epistemology, Ontology and Methodology, pp. 3-29 in J. Phillimore & L. Goodson Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies, Routledge, London


Pons, P.O. 2003, ‘Being-on-holiday: Tourist Dwelling, Bodies and Place’, *Tourist Studies*, vol.3, no.1, 47-66


Richards, G. and King, B. 2003, ‘Youth Travel and Backpacking’, *Travel and Tourism Analyst*, vol.6, Dec, 1-23

Richards, G. and Wilson, J. 2003, *Today’s Youth Travellers: Tomorrow’s Global Nomads. New Horizons in Independent Youth Travel and Student Travel, A Report for the International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC) and the Association of Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS)*, International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC), Amsterdam


Riley, P.J. 1988, ‘Road Culture of International Long-Term Budget Travelers’, Annals of Tourism Research, vol.15, 313-328


Rogers, C.R. 1969, Freedom to Learn, Charles E. Merrill, Columbus


Sharpley, R. 2003, Tourism, Tourists and Society, Elm Publications, Huntingdon


Tardy, C. and Snyder, B. 2004, “‘That’s Why I Do It’: Flow and EFL Teachers’ Practices,” ELT Journal, vol.58, no.2, 118-128

Tabensky, P.A. 2003, Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose, Ashgate, Hampshire


*The Great Indian Yatra* 2000, video recording, S. Kishore and Y. Desai


Tuan, Y. 2001, ‘Life as a Field Trip’, *The Geographical Review*, vol.91, no.1 & 2, 41-45


*Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol.30, no.6, 704-725

Pearson Education, Frenches Forest


Pearson Education, Harlow

Frenches Forest


Voelkl, J., Ellis, G. and Walker, J. 2003, ‘Go With the Flow’, *Parks & Recreation*, vol.38, 
no.8, 20-29

vol.4, no.1, 25-41


Westerhausen, K. and Macbeth, J. 2003, ‘Backpackers and Empowered Local Communities: Natural Allies in the Struggle for Sustainability and Local Control?’, *Tourism Geographies*, vol.5, no.1, 71-86


Wolcott, H.F. 2005, The Art of Fieldwork, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek

Appendices

Appendix A - Information Sheet for Participants

An analysis of the role of self in lifestyle travel

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

This project is part of a PhD in Tourism being undertaken at the University of Otago in New Zealand. The aim of the project is to gain a better understanding of the meanings that individuals may place upon lifestyle travel. We are seeking individuals that travel as a lifestyle. For the purpose of this study, lifestyle travellers include individuals that self-define travel as their lifestyle and have taken multiple long-term trips of approximately six months or more.

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured, open-ended interview that will take approximately one hour to complete. This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Please note that all material provided to the researchers for this project will be treated confidentially and will only be published/disseminated in a format that does not identify individuals. If the participants agree, the data will be collected using a digital recording device and will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Thank you in advance for your help in supporting this project. If you have any future questions about our project, please feel free to contact either:-

Scott Cohen  Dr Neil Carr
Department of Tourism  Department of Tourism
University telephone number: 64 3 479 9189  University telephone number: 64 3 479 5048
Email: scohen@business.otago.ac.nz  Email: ncarr@business.otago.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix B - Consent Form

An analysis of the role of self in lifestyle travel

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.
I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.

3. The digital recordings of the interviews will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

4. This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

5. The thesis based on data gathered will be available in the University of Otago library but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.............................................................................    ................................
(Signature of participant)        (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee
Appendix C – List of interview topics

- Age, gender, nationality and education level of the interviewee.
- Travel history of the interviewee.
- Reasons why the interviewee first decided to go travelling.
- Changes over time in why the interviewee travels as a lifestyle.
- Differences between lifestyle travel and life in the interviewee’s home society.
- The interviewee’s reasons for travelling.
- The role of self in interviewee’s travels.
- The importance of particular moments in the interviewee’s travel motivation. If particular moments are important, a description of these moments.
- The future travel intentions of the interviewee