A ‘JOURNEY OF HER OWN’?:
THE IMPACT OF CONSTRAINTS ON
WOMEN’S SOLO TRAVEL

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather:

**John Robert (Bob) Thomson**
(1922-2002),
who taught me to take risks,
to challenge the status quo
and to stand up for what I believe in.
ABSTRACT

Women are increasingly active in the participation and consumption of travel, and are now recognised as a growing force within the tourism industry. This trend is linked to changing social and political circumstances for Western women around the world. Within Australia specifically, women’s opportunities for education and for earning equitable incomes through employment have improved. Furthermore, traditional ideologies of the family have shifted, so that social expectations of marriage and the production of children do not yield as much power as they once did. As a result of these shifts, women living in contemporary Australia have a wider range of resources and opportunities with which to access an ever-increasing array of leisure/travel choices.

It appears that one of the many ways in which women have been exercising their relatively recent financial and social autonomy is through independent travel. The solo woman traveller represents a growing market segment, with research showing that increasing numbers of females are choosing to travel alone, without the assistance or company of partners, husbands or packaged tour groups. However, little empirical research has explored the touristic experiences of solo women travellers, or examined the constraints and challenges they may face when journeying alone.

‘Constraints’ have been described variously as factors which hinder one’s ability to participate in desired leisure activities, to spend more time in those activities, or to attain anticipated levels of satisfaction and benefit. While the investigation of constraints has contributed to the leisure studies discipline for a number of decades, the exploration of their influence on tourist behaviour and the tourist experience has been virtually overlooked. Research has shown that despite the choices and opportunities women have today, the freedom they have to consume those choices, and to access satisfying leisure and travel experiences, may be constrained by their social and gendered location as females. Although theorisations of constraint have remained largely in the field of leisure studies, it
is argued and demonstrated in this thesis that there is potential in extending constraints theory to the inquiry of the tourist experience.

Grounded in theoretical frameworks offered by gender studies, feminist geography, sociology and leisure, this qualitative study set out to explore the impact of constraints on women’s solo travel experiences. Forty in-depth interviews were held with Australian women who had travelled solo at some stage of their adult lives. Adopting an interpretive and feminist-influenced research paradigm, it was important to allow the women to speak of their lives, constraints and experiences in their own voices and on their own terms. In line with qualitative methodologies, it is these women’s words which form the data for this study. Based on a ‘grounded’ approach to data analysis, the results reveal that constraints do exist and exert influence on these women’s lives and travel experiences in a myriad of ways. Four inter-linking categories of constraint were identified, namely socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial. Further definition of these categories evolved, depending on where the women were situated in their stage of the solo travel experience (that is, pre-travel or during-travel).

The results of this study show that there are identifiable and very real constraints facing solo women travellers. These constraints could stem from the contexts of their home environments, or from the socio-cultural structures of the destinations through which they travelled. However, these constraints were not immutable, insurmountable or even necessarily consciously recognised by many of the women interviewed. In fact, it became increasingly evident that women were finding ways and means to ‘negotiate’ their constraints, challenges and limitations. Three dominant negotiation responses to constraint could be identified; the women could choose to seek access to solo travel when faced with pre-travel constraints: they could withdraw from solo travel because of those same constraints, or they could decide to continue their journeys as a result of their in-situ constraints.
Evidence of women negotiating suggests that constraints are not insurmountable barriers, and confirms that constraints do not necessarily foreclose access to travel. Furthermore, a focus on negotiation re-positions women as active agents in determining the course of their lives and the enjoyment of their solo travel experiences, rather than as passive acceptors of circumstance and constraint. Linking with the concept of negotiation, solo travel was also shown to be a site of resistance, freedom and empowerment for these forty women. Through solo travel, it was apparent that the women could transgress the structures and roles which influenced and governed their lives.

This thesis shows that, through solo travel, the women interviewed found an autonomous and self-determining ‘journey of their own’. At the same time, the extent to which this really was a journey of their own was questioned and revealed to be problematic under a feminist/gendered lens. Thus a more appropriate concept of women’s solo travel is that it is a ‘relative escape’. That is, their journeys, escapes and experiences were always situated relative to the societal expectations and perceptions of home; relative to the gendered perceptions and ideologies of the destination, and relative to the limited spatial freedoms as a result of a socially constructed geography of fear.
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I, Erica Wilson, declare that this work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Erica Wilson
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces this thesis on the constraints faced by Australian women when they travel overseas ‘solo’. By way of providing a contextual background, the chapter begins with a discussion of the contemporary phenomenon of global tourism, highlighting the role that Australians play in this international movement of people. The increasing presence of women in worldwide travel consumption is noted, as are the specific tourism markets where numbers of female travellers are on the rise. Specifically, the growing interest by women in independent and solo forms of travel is emphasised.

The concept of ‘constraint’ is also briefly introduced in this chapter, with a specific focus on how constraints impact on women’s leisure and travel. This then leads to the presentation of the study’s research objectives, which aim broadly to describe and interpret the impact of constraint on women who travel solo. The qualitative, interpretive and gendered research framework that guides the exploration of these research objectives is then explained. Finally, a detailed outline of the thesis is provided.

1.1 Global Tourism: Movement of the People

Humans have always travelled, yet it is only since the end of World War II that we have witnessed phenomenal growth in the numbers of people travelling (Page, 2003; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000; World Tourism Organisation (WTO), 2004). This growth has far surpassed many other social and economic trends in the same social era (Leiper, 2003). Today, tourism is an undeniably global industry. Combined, four cornerstones of post-war modernity have led to this worldwide phenomenon of pleasure travel, namely a demographic shift from production to consumption, an increase in leisure time, an increase in discretionary income and an increase in mobility, most notably through the introduction of relatively cheap jet fueled transportation (Leiper, 2003; Lynch & Veal, 1996; Page, 2003; Weaver
& Oppermann, 2000). These patterns, no doubt, vary from country to country, but in the Western world generally, the opportunities and choices for travel are open to individuals more than ever before.

World Tourism Organisation statistics on international tourist arrivals support such assertions of growth. In 2002, tourist arrivals worldwide crossed the 700 million mark for the first time, with almost 703 million people choosing to make an international trip (WTO, 2004). Despite recent setbacks associated with world terrorist activities and the outbreak of SARS, WTO forecasts predict even more growth, with 1.56 billion international tourist arrivals expected in 2020 (WTO, 2004). The source markets for international tourism continue to be industrialised nations such as Europe, the Americas, East Asia and the Pacific, but markets such as China are growing at a high rate (Page, 2003; WTO, 2004). International tourism remains chiefly the privilege of those from wealthy, developed nations, while the majority of the world’s population is too poor to travel abroad (Leiper, 2003).

Within this phenomenon of global tourism movement, Australians themselves play a small, but notable, role. While the majority of travel made by Australians remains of a domestic nature (75%), in the year ending June 2000, Australian residents took three million international trips (Bureau of Tourism Research, 2001). The most popular destinations for Australians travelling overseas were, in order, New Zealand, USA/Canada and UK/Ireland (BTR, 2001). Australians’ propensity for international travel, despite the country’s relative geographic distance from key tourist destinations such as the UK and the USA, is notable. Since 1974, most full-time employed Australians have enjoyed four weeks of paid annual leave, on par with most Western European nations. In comparison, many workers in the United States are still entitled to only two weeks’ annual leave (Leiper, 2003). Such holiday periods, combined with cheaper and quicker air transportation, have ensured that the numbers of Australians travelling overseas continues to increase exponentially.
1.2 Women and Travel

Against this backdrop of growth in international travel, another tourism phenomenon has been steadily emerging: that of Western women travelling. While women travellers are not a new occurrence, as published historical anthologies now attest (Birkett, 1989; Hodgson, 2002; Russell, 1986), they certainly were in the minority. Historically, global travel and exploration have been the preserve of men.

Tourism researchers have long claimed that women are the primary decision-makers regarding family holidays (Bond, 1997; Collins & Tisdell, 2002; Fodness, 1992; Myers & Moncrieff, 1978; Smith, 1979; Zalatan, 1998), but women are also becoming more prominent in their consumption of other types of travel, including business travel. A reflection of expanding numbers of women in the workforce worldwide, women now make up a much higher proportion of business travellers than they did 30 years ago. In 1970, women represented only 1% of the business travel market (Tunstall, 1989). By contrast, some recent estimates suggest that soon, half of all business travellers will be female (Popcorn & Marigold, 2000; Westwood, 1997). Such projections have seen hotels, airlines and other tourism ventures finding ways to tap the potential of this ‘new’ market of corporate travellers (Bartos, 1989; Harris, 2002; Harris & Ateljevic, 2003; Lutz & Ryan, 1993; Sammons et al., 1999; Westwood, Pritchard & Morgan, 2000).

Research also shows that in terms of travel for pleasure, women seem to be more prominent than men in their desire for adventure travel (Davidson & McKercher, 1993; Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie & Pomfret, 2003), ecotourism (Weaver, 2001) and educational tourism (Gibson, 1998). In the USA, for example, the tour group ‘North American Adventure Travelers’ found that in 1996, 63% of their clients taking trips overseas were women (Bond, 1997). Women are now more prominent on the backpacker circuit, with some anecdotal estimates suggesting that females make up half of the backpacker market in destinations like South-East Asia (Westerhausen, 1997) and Australia (Hillman, 1999). ‘Intrepid’, one of Australia’s leading adventure travel companies, noted in a 1996 survey that 74%
of their clients were women and that most of these women were choosing to travel alone (Bond, 1997). It is difficult to source statistics on what stage of the life cycle women engage in these travel opportunities, but empirical evidence suggests that women over 50 seem particularly prevalent in eco- and educational forms of tourism, given their lessened responsibilities with work, family and child-rearing (Gibson, 1994).

In a study commissioned by the Pacific Asia Travel Association in 1997, Bond (1997) heralded a new ‘growth’ travel market, which she referred to as ‘solo women travellers’. These women travel alone, choosing to journey without family, partners or friends. Statistics available on solo women travellers tend to focus primarily on Western females, although there are exceptions. For instance, increasing numbers of Japanese women are choosing to travel abroad alone (Bond, 1997; Hashimoto, 2000). According to Bond (1997; p. 3), solo women travellers are in search of adventure, social interaction, education and self-understanding, and are confident to go alone:

The solo woman traveller represents a growing and influential market segment. Solo women travellers are not loners; they are bold, confident, gutsy adventurers. When they hear the beckoning call to travel, they don’t wait for or depend upon a husband, friend or tour. These women travel independently.

There are a number of social and political changes which have led to increases in female participation in travel generally and, more specifically, in solo forms of travel. Compared with even a generation ago, social conventions concerning the roles and behaviour of Australian women have altered considerably, as they have throughout much of the Western world (Bryson, 1994). Women’s education and employment opportunities have increased and improved. In 1971, Australian women made up only 37% of the labour workforce, compared with 55% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2003). Women also continue to outnumber men in the pursuit for higher education (ABS, 1994, 1998a).

Ideologies of the family have shifted so that women are no longer expected, nor do they automatically choose, to be partnered or to parent children (Burns, 1994;
Richards, 1994). National statistics support this claim, showing that the marriage rate has declined markedly in Australia and other Western nations since the 1960s (ABS, 1998b), as has the number of childbirths per woman (ABS, 2002a). Furthermore, women are delaying having children (ABS, 2001). As a result of these social changes, women are spending increasing amounts of time without partners, children or other family responsibilities (Scott, 2002). In essence, the numbers of single people in Australia is rising. Some estimates suggest that 4.4 million Australians, or 37% of the total adult population, live alone and without partners (Hannen, 2000). Similar trends are noted in the United Kingdom, where projections indicate that by the year 2020, 30% of the UK’s adult population will be single (Stone & Nichol, 1999). The majority of these single adults are women (Hannen, 2000).

As a result of these demographic shifts and increased freedoms, Australian women are travelling more than ever before. In fact, some statistics show that most outbound Australian travellers today are women (Colebatch, 1999; Collins, 1997). Furthermore, empirical research and media pieces suggest that Australian women are increasingly participating in leisure and tourism activities by themselves (Bond, 1997; Colebatch, 1999; Jackson, 1995; Matthews-Sawyer, McCullough & Meyer, 2002; Slavik & Shaw, 1996a,b). This does not mean that all women undertaking such activities alone are single, but the social trends described above provide some evidence for why we see so many more women travelling alone today. Despite the benefits and freedoms associated with these socio-demographic changes, this does not mean that women enjoy their leisure and tourism activities entirely free from challenge and constraint. Indeed, the literature review in Chapter 2 will demonstrate that the freedoms women have to take advantage of leisure and travel choices are in fact constrained and modified by a range of socio-cultural, political and economic factors.

The recent proliferation of guidebooks and other information for the independent female traveller further attests to the existence of this growing market (Dole, 2002). Certain publishers have produced entire lines dedicated to women’s independent travel, in the belief that women seek different advice and information
than do men travellers (Glotfelty, 1996). For example, the US based publisher ‘Travelers’ Tales’ sells a range of guidebooks and non-fiction anthologies aimed at the solo woman traveller, including ‘Gutsy Women’ (Bond, 2001), ‘Safety and Security for Women Who Travel’ (Swan & Laufer, 1997) and ‘A Woman’s Passion for Travel’ (Bond & Michael, 1999). Another North American guidebook aimed at solo women travellers is Zepatos’ (1992) ‘A Journey of One’s Own: Uncommon Advice for the Independent Woman Traveler’. In the United Kingdom, similar publications can be found, such as Rough Guides’ series on independent female travellers, ‘Women Travel’ (Davies & Jansz, 1993). The Australian-based travel agency STA produced ‘Going Solo’, a guide written with the purpose of assisting Australian women in their overseas journeys (White, 1989). Internet ‘e-zines’ and discussion pages have also emerged in response to the demands of female travellers, and include ‘Journeywoman Online’ (www.journeywoman.com) and ‘Travel Tips: Just for Women’ (www.tips4travel.com). This raft of women-centred travel information implies that not only does a significant female independent travel market exist, but that women may have unique needs and require specific advice for travelling alone.

1.3 Women, Solo Travel and Constraint

Constraints have been described as factors which hinder one’s ability to participate in desired leisure activities, to spend more time in those activities, or to attain anticipated levels of satisfaction or benefit (Jackson, 1988). The notion of constraints has been a central focus of study and theorisation within the leisure studies field for almost two decades (Jackson & Scott, 1999). Though much of our understanding of constraints is grounded in leisure studies, researchers have recently highlighted the potential for extending constraints theory to the study of tourist behaviour and the tourist experience (Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Hudson, 2000; Hudson & Gilbert, 1999; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002).

The conceptual connection between leisure and tourism is now well recognised, with many commentators arguing that travel takes place during periods away from
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

work and during one’s leisure time. Furthermore, studies of tourism and leisure experiences tend to reveal similar motivational and behavioural elements, as both travellers and leisure seekers are in search of escape, freedom and pleasure (Carr, 2002; Colton, 1987; Fedler, 1987; Gibson, 2001; Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Leiper, 2003; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1997; Moore, Cushman & Simmons, 1995; Pearce, 1982; Ryan, 1994; Yiannakis & Gibson, 1992). On this basis, the extension of leisure constraints theory into the field of tourism seems a valid addition, offering the potential to yield further insights into the very human experience that is travel.

Hudson and Gilbert (1999; p. 69) posit that a lack of constraints research in tourism reveals a ‘neglected dimension’ of study, yet a relatively small number of tourism theorists have recently begun to explore constraints frameworks. For example, leisure constraints theory has been applied to investigate tourist seasonality (Hinch & Jackson, 2000) and general tourist decision-making behaviour (Dellaert, Ettema & Lindh, 1998; Um & Crompton, 1992). Other authors have taken a focussed constraints approach to studies of participation or non-participation in certain types of tourist activity, such as downhill skiing (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999), nature-based tourism (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002) and museum visitation (Tian, Crompton & Witt, 1996). Constraints frameworks have also been utilised to assist understanding of the tourist behaviour and experiences of certain social sub-groups or ‘niche markets’, such as seniors (Blazey, 1987; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Zimmer, Brayley & Searle, 1995), adolescents (Carr, 2000) and people with disabilities (Smith, 1987).

The results of such studies demonstrate that touristic experiences are not equally accessible for all individuals and social sub-groups. Despite this claim, constraints remains only a nascent area of study within the field of tourism, and our current knowledge remains superficial at best. Furthermore, constraints studies in tourism tend to focus on what prevents travel, but very few researchers have paid attention to how constraints might actually impact on the travel experience itself.
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Research on women’s leisure has revealed that females tend to be more highly and intensely constrained than men in seeking access to recreation activities (Henderson, 1991; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Searle & Jackson, 1985). Moreover, constraints appear to be heightened for women when they partake in activities out of the home or in the outdoors, due to fear for their personal safety (Deem, 1996; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Little, 2002; Mason, 1988; Virden & Walker, 1999). Yet research on constraints for female travellers is limited, despite a growing body of studies investigating aspects of women’s travel experience (see Davidson, 1996; Elsrud, 1998; Hashimoto, 2000; Hillman, 1999; Hottola, 2002; Jordan, 1998; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001; Small, 1999, 2002; Stone & Nichol, 1999; Thomas, 2000).

There is thus a gap in the current empirical knowledge concerning how constraints play a role on the experiences of women who choose to travel solo. While the study of constraints offers new ways of understanding women’s travel experience, it is now widely recognised that people find ways to ‘negotiate’ their constraints to ensure participation (Jackson, Crawford & Godbey, 1993; Kay & Jackson, 1991; Little, 2000, 2002). This concept of negotiation has important ramifications for the study of women’s leisure and travel, and for this thesis, as it re-positions women as active agents in negotiating their lives and limitations, rather than as passive acceptors of constraint.

1.4 Definitions: ‘Independent’ and ‘Solo’ Traveller

The terms ‘independent’ and ‘solo’ traveller are used throughout this thesis, and their meanings must be clearly explained at the outset. ‘Independent traveller’ is a phrase coined to describe a diverse, complex and growing market of tourists which seemed to have different needs and motivations from the mass, organised tourist. Also known widely in the literature as ‘fully independent travellers’ (or FITs), independent travellers are described as tourists who neither travel on a fully-inclusive package nor in a group (Chai, 1996). It is difficult to describe any real demographic or socio-psychological traits associated with independent
travellers, as the market covers such a wide range of ages, cultural backgrounds and motivations. However, it is evident that this group of tourists prefers to make their own travel arrangements and itineraries, pre-booking only a bare minimum of accommodation, transport and activities prior to their holiday (Hyde, 1997). Independent travellers also tend to stay longer on average in their holiday destination as compared with other tourists (Chai, 1996).

‘Solo traveller’, according to the tourism literature, refers simply to a person who arrives in a country alone (Foo, 1999). While the solo traveller may indeed arrive alone, this does not mean that they remain alone for the entire duration of their holiday. In fact, most solo travellers to Australia (it is estimated that about 45% of all international visitors to Australia in 1997 arrived alone) are visiting friends and relatives (Foo, 1999). In this sense, the term ‘solo’ refers only to one’s arrival status, rather than to their status while on holiday. Furthermore, the solo traveller may or may not be a fully independent traveller, but from limited empirical research on people who travel alone (Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Mehmetoglu, Dann & Larsen, 2001; Slavik & Shaw, 1996a,b), it may be suggested that solo travellers are also likely to be independent travellers, preferring freedom and flexibility to the more structured nature of the packaged, organised holiday.

For the purposes of this research, then, the term ‘independent traveller’ is used as a broad term to refer to tourists who primarily prefer flexible, self-directed pleasure holidays. In this way, they are set apart from those travelling for business or on packaged vacations (Hyde, 1997). When referring to ‘solo travellers’ in this thesis, the term refers to people (in this case women) who travel, for the most part, on their own. Solo travellers leave home alone, they travel primarily by themselves (although they may meet up with others along the way or use tours from time to time) and they alone are responsible for their travel activities, choices and itineraries. In trying to ascertain the meaning of travel for women and the constraints that they face, it was felt that speaking to women who travelled solo would result in a more insightful exploration of the research objectives. When travelling alone, it may be that the constraints and challenges confronted are of a unique and more intense nature than for those who travel with
tour groups or on packaged vacations. Furthermore, some studies have shown that overcoming constraints through travelling solo leads to a greater sense of achievement and self-determination for women (Butler, 1995; Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b).

Sex and solo status were the only definers used to describe the women interviewed for this study. It was not the aim to limit the sample to one particular travel role, such as ‘backpacker’, as it was felt that such descriptors would be too confining. What was sought was a diversity of women who had played various tourist roles and had travelled in a variety of ways. What was of interest in this research was the solo, independent nature of the women’s travel, not whether they could be described as backpackers or if they identified with backpacker traits. As Page (2003) has noted, it has become increasingly difficult to pigeonhole individuals into any kind of tourist type, because the attitudes, perceptions and motivations which drive tourism demand are complex and ever-changing. For instance, the term backpacker is defined predominantly as a young, budget-conscious, independent traveller who carries his or her possessions in a backpack and stays at backpacker lodges (Buchanan & Rosetto, 1997; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Riley, 1988). But in actual fact, backpackers comprise a diverse group of individuals, who may also be older, stay with family and friends and use more expensive accommodation. Research suggests that a backpacker can in fact act out multiple tourist roles, and can be differentiated based on a variety of travel motivations, social roles and activities (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Moore, Cushman & Simmons, 1995).

Similarly, and as discussed previously, a solo traveller may arrive in a country alone and organise his or her own accommodation, but may also travel with others and structure their trip partly by using tour and accommodation packages to access certain destinations. In these ways, on one single trip, a person may have the freedom and choice to play a number of different roles, from organised mass tourist through to fully independent traveller. As a result, while tourist roles and typologies remain useful for abstract conceptualisations of the travelling
population, in reality people may not fit so neatly into such prescriptive, preordained boxes (Wall, 1997; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000).

1.5 Research Objectives

Founded on a recognition of the growing phenomenon of women’s participation in solo travel, and the knowledge gaps concerning the impact of constraints on women’s leisure travel experiences, this study has the following research objectives:

♦ To explore the meaning and importance of solo travel for (Australian) women, and the role it plays in the wider context of their everyday lives;

♦ To identify the constraints associated with women’s solo travel, and then describe how those constraints impact on their solo travel experience;

♦ To identify and describe the strategies and behaviours that solo women travellers might use to negotiate their constraints, and

♦ To determine the relevance and appropriateness of leisure constraints theory for understanding the solo female travel experience.

1.6 Research Frameworks

The process of addressing these research objectives must be positioned firmly within a theoretical research framework, or research paradigm. An interpretive paradigm, adopting primarily qualitative data collection techniques, will guide this study of constraints faced by solo women travellers. A gender-aware approach offers the ideological lens through which the research is viewed and undertaken.
1.6.1 A Gendered Approach

This research on women and solo travel is located in an a paradigm which recognises that all social, cultural and political interactions are gendered, including tourism processes and experiences (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994, 1996; Pritchard, 2001). ‘Gender’, as it is used throughout this study, refers not to one’s biological sex (e.g. man or woman), but rather infers a more complex meaning as a socio-cultural construct which governs how men and women relate to each other in a wider social milieu (Henderson, 1990a). Gender analyses are relatively new to the field of tourism studies when compared with some disciplines like leisure studies (Gibson, 2001; Kinnaird & Hall, 2000; Richter, 1995; Swain, 1995), but in the last few years, a growing body of gender-related tourism research is evident. As it stands, however, gendered aspects of the consumption and production of tourism remain peripheral in the field of tourism studies (Pritchard, 2001), and are still in need of further research attention (Gibson, 2001).

Kinnaird and Hall’s (1994) ‘gender-aware’ framework provides an overarching structure for this research on women’s solo travel. At the time of writing, this was the only theoretical framework available to consider the impact of gender on tourism processes, production and consumption. Kinnaird & Hall (1994; p. 24) highlight three factors that must be addressed if tourism research is to be more gender-aware:

1. The activities and processes associated with tourism development are constructed out of gendered societies;

2. Gender relations both inform, and are informed by, the practices of all societies. Therefore, economic, social, cultural, political and environmental aspects of tourism-related activity interact with the gendered nature of individual societies and the way in which gender relations are defined and redefined over time; and
3. Discussions of gender and gender relations are concerned with issues of power and control, and are political relations at the household, community and societal levels … tourism revolves around social interaction and social articulations of motivations, desires, traditions and perceptions, all of which are gendered.

Essentially, this framework explicitly recognises that we do not live in a gender-free society, and that all aspects of society are inherently gendered. Kinnaird and Hall (1994) explicitly acknowledge the impact of gender, power, change and domination on all tourism activities, behaviours and processes. Operating within this framework are gendered tourists, gendered hosts and gendered tourism industries. Under this banner of gender-aware research may sit studies about women, studies about men, studies about sexuality, or studies about both men and women and their inter-relationships.

1.6.2 Interpretive, Qualitative Research

The way that academic knowledge is constructed is inherently influenced by the worldviews, or paradigms, to which the inquirer subscribes. Indeed, as Henderson (1990b; p. 169) surmises, it is widely acknowledged in this postmodern era that “reality comes through a prism”. The prism in Henderson’s analogy is the worldview of the inquirer, which he or she brings to a project and which has bearing on all stages of the research (Merriam, 1998).

Based on the exploratory nature of the research objectives, which emphasised women’s voices and diversity of experience, it was felt that a paradigm which emphasised richness, description and meaning would be most appropriate. In turn, a positivistic model was rejected as this would not adequately allow for the women’s subjective voices to be heard (McIntosh, 1998; Norris & Wall, 1994; Small, 1999). As a result, an interpretive, post-positivistic paradigm was adopted. Interpretivists are keenly interested in human lives and the ‘lived experience’, both individual and collective (Denzin, 1992; Kvale, 1983; Merriam, 1998;
Patton, 1990; van Manen, 1990). In interpretive research, individuals’ worlds as they see and experience them should be paramount (Blumer, 1969; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With these understandings guiding the current research, in-depth interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection. In sociological approaches to tourism research, in-depth interviews can help to uncover the hidden, complex meanings of travel that may remain shrouded through the use of structured surveys and quantitative analyses (Leiper, 2003). In-depth interviewing is also popular in feminist and gender-aware approaches as it ensures that women are able to describe their experiences in their own words, as well as encouraging a more equal relationship between ‘researcher’ and the ‘researched’ (Little, 2000; Reinharz, 1992; Small, 1999).

### 1.7 Thesis Outline

This chapter has provided an introductory background to women and solo travel, set against the backdrop of global changes in international tourism. Highlighting gaps in the literature in the area of women, travel and constraint, this chapter has also outlined four research objectives to address these gaps, and provided a glimpse of the research paradigm which will guide the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature which explains in more detail some of the concepts introduced here. The literature review begins with an extended discussion on the contribution of feminism and gender studies to tourism research, given their theoretical centrality in the current thesis. The sociology of the tourist experience is then examined, followed by a brief consideration of the role of women in the history of travel and exploration. Finally, the theory on leisure constraints and negotiation is reviewed, as is its relevance to the study of tourist behaviour, and in particular the female solo travel experience.
Methodological aspects of the study are discussed in Chapter 3, where the interpretive, qualitative paradigm which guides the research is examined in more detail. Justifications for why such an approach is suitable for a study of women’s travel constraints will be provided. The data collection and data analysis processes are also explained. In addition, issues of validity, trustworthiness and generalisability are considered, as are limitations associated with the adopted methodological approach.

Together, chapters 4, 5 and 6 comprise the results section of this thesis. Chapter 4 identifies and categorises the constraints reported by solo women travellers interviewed for this study, while Chapter 5 describes the negotiation strategies that these women used to cope with their reported constraints. Chapter 6 forms the third and final chapter of the results section, and examines the relationship between constraint and negotiation, as well as offering a descriptive model of the constraints-negotiation process as a whole. In all of these results chapters, detailed excerpts from the women’s interviews and stories are given in support of the key themes and categories which emerged. Chapter 7 discusses the overall meaning of the results, with the aim of linking the findings back to existing theory and literature. Chapter 8, by way of a conclusion, offers a summary of the thesis and its key findings, in addition to offering suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented in this chapter has evolved and refocused with the study’s progression, changing and responding to issues as they arose out of data analysis. As an exploratory study, this research began as a broad investigation of women’s experiences of solo travel – the meaning of travel in their lives, the constraints they face and the benefits they receive. However, what became evident through data analysis was that while issues of constraint and limitation were indeed important, they did not fully explain the women’s lives and experiences. Another story emerged in which the women demonstrated active negotiation of their constraints.

Thus, while the present study adopts leisure constraints theory as a filter for understanding the solo travel experiences of women, other filters became increasingly important as the research progressed. Turning again to the literature, theories on negotiation, resistance, and empowerment threw additional light on the women’s ability to manage and cope with their constraints. These areas of study contributed to a more complex and detailed picture of the women’s solo travel experiences. Subsequently, the following literature review is a result of reaching into a multi-disciplinary basket, which includes leisure studies, sociology, feminist/gender studies, cultural geography and psychology.

This chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section is a review of how feminism and gender studies have influenced and contributed to the field of tourism studies. The nature of the solo tourist experience is then explored in the second section, followed in the third section by an historical review of women’s participation in exploration and solo travel. Leading to the theoretical framework of this research, the fourth section offers a review of leisure constraints theory, while the fifth section focuses specifically on the application of leisure constraints to tourism research and the impact of constraint on women’s leisure and travel experiences. This final section also incorporates a discussion of the concepts of
negotiation, empowerment and resistance and how they relate to women’s experience of constraint. Finally, a summary is provided which reviews the key issues and research gaps relevant to the study of women’s solo travel constraints.

2.1 Gender and Tourism Research

Over the past three decades, feminist researchers have challenged and deconstructed the acquisition of academic knowledge, disrupting long-held assumptions about male and female behaviour and drawing critical attention to what it means to be women and men in contemporary social life. The term ‘feminism’ is usually associated with the contemporary Women’s Liberation Movement, which emerged in North America in the late 1960s. This movement is also referred to as ‘second-wave’ feminism. Second-wave was a label used to distinguish the modern liberation movement from the first-wave suffragette struggles of Western women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Curthoys, 1994).

It should be noted that ‘feminism’ is not a social movement whose proponents hold homogenous views and opinions on the oppression and subjugation of women. Several early second-wave assumptions have been problematised through the fragmentation of feminist ideologies, particularly those surrounding the ideas that women are united in their feminist positions (Reade, 1994). Increasingly, ethnic women and women of colour in particular began to raise the question, ‘is gender enough?’ (DeVault, 1996). There now exist several types of ‘feminisms’, or feminist movements, under the overarching banner of second-wave feminism. Liberal feminists, for example, focus on humanist philosophies of justice, equality, individualism and the right of all humans to freedom of choice (Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz, 1997). Marxist feminism, also referred to as socialist feminism, is a movement which is similarly committed to the emancipation of women, however emphasis is placed on the discrimination of women at the hands of capitalist modes of production (Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz, 1997; Curthoys, 1997). Radical feminists seek to make fundamental
changes to society. The radical feminist movement can be distinguished from other types of feminism, such as liberal or socialist feminism, because of its preoccupation with the binding and immutable ‘gender divide’ (Curthoys, 1994). Radical feminists, it is said, will always prioritise the male/female divide – the oppression of all males over all females - over other social separations such as race, class and ethnicity (Curthoys, 1994; Reade, 1994).

A major contributor to the deconstruction of an all-encompassing ‘sisterhood’ was the concern of black and other non-white/Anglo feminists, who challenged white feminists on the basis of inherent racism. Black feminists such as bell hooks [sic] (1989) questioned comfortable Western assumptions about sex and gender. White, middle-class feminists, the most vocal in the contemporary women’s movement, began to realise that their experiences were not shared by all. Complexities of race, nationality and ethnicity, in addition to gender and sex, led to a heightened awareness of differences among women (Kilic, 1994).

Other types of feminism that have emerged and been coined as specific progressions within the feminist movement are ecofeminism, postmodern feminism, lesbian feminism and cultural feminism. Despite these documented differences in feminist ideology, all share an emancipatory focus at their centre and consistently return to a core set of issues which all feminists ostensibly should share. Stanley and Wise (1983) state that feminists, despite their differences (or perhaps because of) must continue to collectively recognise that women all over the world are still oppressed, and that women everywhere should strive to gain a new understanding of their oppression through consciousness-raising activities.

Central to feminist ideology, particularly radical feminist thought, is the idea that society is patriarchal. Patriarchal systems are dominated by men and male concerns, and work to subjugate and disempower women in economic, social and political ways (Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz, 1997). Simone de Beauvoir’s (1989/1949) central thesis was that throughout social history, women have occupied a secondary position to men, always construed as ‘Other’ to the normative male. In particular, feminists see that women are oppressed in
contemporary capitalist societies, primarily because of their association and definition with family life within this political system (Spender, 1985; Summers, 1975).

‘Gender’ is a concept widely attributed to second-wave feminism, when the distinction between sex (the biological determination of male and female) and gender (the social construction of normative male and female roles) was emphasised (Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz, 1997; Curthoys, 1994; Eichler, 1980; Fox-Keller, 1990; Oakley, 1972). Gender refers to the descriptors of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, not as immutable structures, but as constantly changing categories shaped by social and cultural factors (Lather, 1991; Siann, 1994). De Beauvoir’s (1989/1949p. xii) renowned assertion that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” neatly encapsulates the feminist viewpoint that gender is a social construction. Feminist authors such as Berscheid (1993) and Oakley (1972) maintain that in most gendered societies, it is the attributes of males that are valued more highly than are attributes of females. While the sex/gender debate continues to rage in feminist and non-feminist circles alike (Curthoys, 1994), it stands as an important hallmark of the contemporary feminist movement.

### 2.1.1 The Evolution of Gender Issues in Tourism Research

While feminism and gender issues have challenged and altered several academic disciplines, they remain nascent, albeit growing, areas of inquiry within tourism studies (Gibson, 2001; Kinnaird & Hall, 2000; Swain, 2002; Timothy, 2001; Wall & Norris, 2003). To outline the evolution of gender issues in the study of tourism and travel, Henderson’s (1994b) ‘five-phase framework’ of gender scholarship is adopted (see Table 2.1). This framework is based on the feminist-phase work of Tetrault, which Henderson modified to document the evolution of gender theory within the field of leisure studies. The framework begins with the ‘womanless’ scholarship phase, moving through to the ‘compensatory/add women’, ‘bifocal/sex difference’, ‘feminist/women-centric’ phases and ending with the
‘new/gender scholarship’ platform of thought. Each of these phases will now be discussed in turn, with regard to their applicability and relevance to tourism research.

**Table 2.1: A Review of Tourism Literature using the Five-Phase Framework of Gender Scholarship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Scholarship</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Application to Tourism Research (selected examples)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st: Invisible/ Womanless</td>
<td>Men’s experiences and perspectives are regarded as universal; women are not explicitly acknowledged and their experiences are subsumed under the male experience.</td>
<td>The dominant perspective in the early years of tourism’s development as an academic field of study (starting around 1972). No studies addressing women or gender can be found in the tourism journals around this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd: Compensatory/ ‘Add Women’</td>
<td>Otherwise known as the ‘add women and stir’ phase; mostly male-defined, but women are acknowledged, without reference to broader gendered contexts.</td>
<td>First articles specifically on women in tourism begin to appear, essentially ‘adding’ women to the discourse of tourism and travel. Considers women’s perspectives only as relative to males: • Smith (1979): ‘Women: The taste makers in tourism’ • Hawes (1988): ‘Travel related profile of older women’ • Zalatan (1998): ‘Wives’ involvement in tourism decision processes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th: Feminist/ Women-Centred</td>
<td>Women and their lives are the focus of research; feminist aims often clearly explicat ed (eg. women’s oppression emphasised).</td>
<td>Research which explicitly and consciously focusses on women, as both tourists and hosts: • Small (1999): ‘Memory work: A method for researching women’s tourist experiences’ • Bolles (1997): ‘Women as a category of analysis in scholarship on tourism’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th: New/Gender Scholarship</td>
<td>‘Multifocal’ and ‘relational’, as this phase focuses on women’s and men’s experiences with a specific focus on socialisation and gender relations.</td>
<td>Tourism research which examines both men’s and women’s perspectives, with the aim of positioning their experiences within a ‘gendered’ society: • Swain (1995): ‘Gender and tourism: Special edition of the Annals of Tourism Research’ • Kinnaird &amp; Hall (1994): ‘Tourism: A gender analysis’ • Meisch (2002): ‘Sex and Romance on the Trail in the Andes: Guides, Gender &amp; Authority’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Henderson (1994b) and supported by ideas from Aitchison (2001) and Swain (1995)
2.1.1.1 Womanless Phase: The Invisibility of Women in Tourism Research

The first of Henderson’s five stages is the ‘invisible’ or ‘womanless’ scholarship phase. This platform of thought reflects claims that academic analyses of social life, including tourism, have been largely ‘gender blind’ (Warner-Smith, 2000; p. 33). In this phase, leisure research was conducted using primarily male participants, leaving women’s experiences overlooked and leisure behaviour defined according only to one sex (Deem, 1986; Little, 1997).

When applied to tourism, the phase framework reveals that many early sociological models expounded in the 1970s and 1980s assumed, unwittingly or not, a universal male experience of travel. Women’s voices in earlier tourism research were almost non-existent. As a result, early sociological discourses of tourism and travel have been criticised as ‘male-centric’, and ensured the invisibility of women (Aitchison, 1996; Clifford, 1997; Norris & Wall, 1994; Swain, 1995; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994; Wearing & Wearing, 1996). Evidence of male-dominated discussions of tourism, and women’s invisibility, can be seen in Stanley Plog’s (1984; cited in Ross, 1994; p. 35) early work on the psychographic characterisation of tourists, in which ‘masculinity’ was considered one of eight types of personality dimensions that made up the tourist:

[The tourist is] the ‘action-oriented’ man whose primary goal is to seek the outdoors in the very traditional sense (fishing, camping, hunting, field and stream pursuits). This type of person is more likely to travel by car and take many things with him. Wives are often forced into going along with these interests or they are left at home.

The masculine language used in other early academic tourism writings further contributed to women’s invisibility. Male archetypal heroes such as the wandering Ulysses are put forward as representing the experiences of all tourists, as seen in Pearce’s (1988) ‘The Ulysses Factor’. Ulysses is chosen as reflective of the traits of the modern tourist: “he is a liar, he is arrogant, grasping, he bears grudges, and above all, he is self interested” (p. 226). Krippendorf (1997; p. 38) refers to the “motives of the mobile leisureman” (emphasis added).
While such excerpts reveal the non gender-inclusive language which even still seems to prevail (eg. Krippendorf, 1997) there is no excusing the fact that these writings effectively demonstrate that women’s experiences were not mentioned or considered. Unwittingly or not, in the womanless phase of tourism research, the tourist experience usually meant, and sometimes still means, the male tourist experience. This reveals that this five-phase framework is not necessarily progressive or chronological, as clearly still elements of some of the ‘earlier’ phases (ie. ‘womanless’ and ‘compensatory’) are still in effect in the academic discourse today. It is argued (Johnston, 2001; Westwood, Pritchard & Morgan, 2000) that if gender and the sexed body are not made explicit in tourism studies, then there is a danger that the tourist becomes masculine by default and that female behaviour will remain subsumed within the dominant male paradigm.

2.1.1.2 Compensatory Phase: Adding Women to Tourism Research

Henderson’s next phase refers to ‘compensatory’ scholarship, which she also calls the ‘add women and stir’ phase. Stanley and Wise (1983) have referred to this type of research as a process of ‘filling in the gaps’, albeit a necessary action for including women into areas of social research from which they had previously been excluded. In this second phase, research remains predominantly male-defined but women are ‘at least’ acknowledged. The compensatory phase starts to address women more explicitly, but their perspectives are usually considered only as relative to men’s (Henderson, 1994b).

In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the first articles on women began to appear in the tourism literature, essentially adding women to the discourse. Women as a topic of travel and tourism emerged most prominently, perhaps, through Valene Smith’s (1979) paper, ‘Women: The Taste Makers in Tourism’. A study conducted a decade later by Hawes (1988) discussed the travel related profiles of older women. These types of studies considered women as a new and homogenous market segment, to which tourism marketers should pay heed (Bartos, 1989). By extension, the compensatory style of tourism research is also seen when women’s travel behaviour is described and singled out, but is still considered only in relation to their husbands, partners or families (eg. Zalatan,
1998). While compensatory studies have at least mentioned and considered women’s experience, they have not done much for furthering our understanding of the wider societal, gendered and political structures which result in women’s subordination and which constrain their experience. As Deem (1995; p. 264) has noted in this context, “taking gender seriously means much more the noticing the existence of women”.

2.1.1.3 Bifocal Phase: The Gender Differential in Tourism Research

Following on from compensatory phase is the ‘bifocal’ stage, also referred to as the ‘sex differences’ or ‘dichotomous difference’ phase. Henderson (1994b) identifies the bifocal phase as one that emphasises chiefly the differences between the sexes with regard to leisure or travel behaviour. One of the first examples of the bifocal stage in tourism research is a study by Myers and Moncrief (1978) which compared the travel decision-making behaviour of husbands and wives. Myers and Moncrief’s research found that husbands primarily controlled decisions relating to travel routes, but that decisions about accommodation were shared generally by both husband and wife.

Other more recent studies are further reflective of the bifocal phase in tourism studies. Ryan, Henley and Soutar (1998), for example, investigated sex differences in tourism destination choice-making. Their hypothesis was that males and females would have different criteria for making choices about which destinations to visit within Australia. Similarly, Frew and Shaw (1999) studied sex differences in destination choice, while McGehee, Loker-Murphy and Uysal (1996) examined the difference in motivations between male and female pleasure travellers.

This pursuit for male–female difference becomes problematic for a number of reasons when examined from a feminist/gendered perspective. Firstly, any gender differences found are merely noted rather than explained (Henderson, 1994b; Norris & Wall, 1994). Noting differences between the sexes may be informative but ultimately cements the essentialist male/female dichotomy. Furthermore, such an approach may indirectly “promote the status quo in that it usually ignores the
different constraints and opportunities to which women and men are exposed” (Norris & Wall, 1994; p. 58). This argument is further supported by Henderson (1994b; p. 132), who claims that “arguing that no differences exist draws attention away from actual difference in power and resources between men and women”. Another potential pitfall of this approach is that both groups will start to be seen as ‘internally homogenous’ segments, rather than as heterogenous groups of people with diverse travel behaviours and motivations (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000).

A second related problem with the bifocal phase, as with the compensatory phase, is that when differences are found or not found, these results are not situated within the societal contexts which create them (Henderson, 1994b; Kinnaird & Hall, 2000; Swain, 1995). As Kinnaird and Hall (2000) assert, gender is not an uncontested variable “able to be analysed without any reference to the social context within which it is defined” (p. 72). While useful for some purposes, sex difference research makes little real contribution to a true gendered understanding of tourist behaviour.

Accordingly, several authors have misappropriated the term ‘gender’ to describe studies which really only focus on sex differences. It is argued by some authors that sex difference research cannot claim to be true gender scholarship as there is usually a lack of explanation as to why gender differences occur, or what these differences might mean in relation to the broader societal milieu (Henderson, 1994a,b; Norris & Wall, 1994; Swain, 1995). For example, Carr’s (1999) study of young tourist behaviour in an English coastal resort town illustrates well the problematic nature of gender difference research. His study concluded by claiming that there were virtually ‘no gendered differences’ with regard to the travel behaviour of young men and women. Carr also commented on an apparent overall decline in leisure differences between the two sexes, stating that young men and women are becoming indistinguishable with regard to their tourist and leisure behaviours. This pattern may indeed be the case, however there was little discussion of the reasons for why these results might have emerged. In this way, Carr’s (1999) conclusions are reflective of Henderson’s concern with sex
differences being the ‘end point’ of research, rather than a starting point that leads to situating such results back to the macro-level.

Other authors have tried to address the reasons behind why they might find gendered differences in tourist behaviour. Harvey, Hunt and Harris (1995) researched the differences in attitudes between men and women in rural Idaho towards the community’s level of dependence on tourism. The study did not reveal any significant ‘gender’ differences, as they put it, but the authors at least provided possible social reasons for this finding, and suggested further qualitative research to explore the issue more fully.

In conclusion, it can be said that sex difference research has made women more visible in leisure and tourism research, as their behaviours, needs and wants are increasingly being examined and discussed. However, it would be presumptuous to assume that one makes leisure or travel decisions because of one’s biological sex (Rojek & Urry, 1997). It is the cultural expectations, or the gendered roles associated with being male or female in a particular culture, that should be acknowledged when studying travel decision-making and tourist behaviour.

**2.1.1.4 Women-Centred Phase: Feminist Contributions to Tourism Research**

The ‘women-centred’ or ‘feminist’ phase refers to research which “examines the experiences of women not in relation to men necessarily but in an attempt to understand the importance and meaning of women’s lives” (Henderson, 1994b; p. 125). This fourth phase moves beyond both compensation and difference to investigate women specifically, often from an explicitly feminist perspective. In this feminist phase, issues of gender and power remain central, and tourism researchers increasingly realised that they could “take nothing for granted” and that “knowledge is always situated and … implicated in complex power relations” (Byrne & Lentin, 2000; p. 31).
A number of tourism authors are beginning to move away from the bifocal stage to focus on women’s experiences as consumers and producers in the tourism industry. In this way, many studies are consciously attempting to fill an apparent gap in tourism research, a gap that has neglected to speak of the travel and tourism experiences of half of the world’s population. Rather than merely ‘adding’ women to an already androcentric study, a number of studies have begun to address women’s experiences of tourism deliberately and explicitly, not in terms of how they are different from men (see Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Bolles, 1997; Davidson, 1996; Davidson & McKercher, 1993; Elsrud, 1998, 2001; Fullagar, 2002; Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Harris & Ateljevic, 2003; Lutz & Ryan; 1993; Small, 1999, 2002, 2003; Thomas, 2000; Westwood, Pritchard & Morgan, 2001).

Henderson (1994b) acknowledges errors made in the past when researching women’s leisure, particularly the assumption that women’s experiences were homogenous. Indeed, continuing to focus on women only, without paying attention to intra-sex differences or to women’s relationships with men, has left some wondering if this has resulted in a ‘ghettoisation’ of gender studies (Deem, 1999). To ensure a path out of this ghetto, both Deem (1999) and Henderson (1994b) suggest that a shift needs to be made to incorporate new gender theories and frameworks. Such a shift will encourage a broader understanding of both men’s and women’s lives as relative to the gendered societies in which they live.

2.1.1.5 Gender Scholarship: Awareness of Gender Issues in Tourism Research

The fifth phase, known as ‘new’ or ‘gender scholarship’, signifies a stage in which both women’s and men’s experiences are related to a broader societal context in an effort to create a richer picture of society and human behaviour. Gender scholarship signals a progression from mere observations about differences in sex, as exemplified in the bifocal phase, to analysis and interpretation of why gendered differences exist. Gender scholarship insists that ‘women’ or ‘men’ are not studied without considering the interactions of both sexes together against the backdrop of a wider social and gendered milieu.
The call for more balanced approach to the ‘gender and tourism’ research agenda is perhaps a reflection of the ‘knowledge-based platform’ (Jafari, 1990), an ideological perspective which became increasingly evident in tourism studies throughout the 1990s (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). The knowledge-based position strives not to simply advocate either the negative or positive implications of tourism, but favours objectivity, balanced opinion and multi-disciplinary viewpoints and methods of inquiry. Thus knowledge-based advocates would call for studies to not focus singly on either men or women, but on the complex relationships that occur in the interaction of the two sexes.

Three important works produced in the mid-1990s brought ‘gender’ issues to the forefront of the tourism research agenda. These were a literature synthesis prepared by Norris and Wall (1994) called ‘Gender and Tourism’, a special edition on gender and tourism in the ‘Annals of Tourism Research’, edited by Margaret Byrne Swain (1995) and a book edited by Kinnaird and Hall (1994) titled ‘Tourism: A Gender Analysis’. The authors of these publications called for tourism researchers to consider the importance of gender and power when studying the social complexities of tourism-related activity. While emphasising women’s experience as producers and consumers of tourism, these publications also pointed to the interaction of gender with other important social factors, such as ethnicity, class and race.

A more recent paper by Gibson (2001) provides an encompassing synthesis of gender and tourism research during the 1990s. She distinguishes gender and tourism research according to two key foci: ‘gendered hosts’ (tourism supply) or ‘gendered tourists’ (tourism demand). Research on the gendered host tends to concentrate on two streams of thought. The first identifiable discourse is that tourism development is merely an extension of the dominant Western imperialist paradigm, which serves to reinforce gender inequities by keeping women in unstable, lower paid positions while at the same time expecting that they continue to carry the burden of domestic work (eg. Cukier, Norris & Wall, 1996; Enloe, 1989; Levy & Lerch, 1991; Momsen, 1994; Rao, 1995; Robson, 2002; Scott, 1995; Sinclair, 1997; Wilkinson & Pratiwi, 1995). Sex tourism and its associated
marketing is viewed as yet another way in which the tourism industry works to objectify and exploit women, as well as men and young children (Budhos, 1997; Cohen, 1995; Griffiths, 1999; Jeffreys, 1999; O’Connell Davidson, 1998; Pritchard, 2001). The other stream of thought is that tourism can enhance women’s status and access to paid employment, creating a sense of empowerment and financial independence which otherwise might not have been achievable (Abbott Cone, 1995; Garcia-Ramon, Canoves & Valdovinos, 1995; Henrici, 2002; Hull & Milne, 1998; Scheyvens, 2000; Swain, 1989). More controversially, this latter argument has even been applied to sex tourism, in terms of the positive benefits and increased economic status that women supposedly can achieve through prostitution (Oppermann, 1998, 1999).

Until recently, research focussing on the gendered tourist has been less forthcoming as compared to studies of the gendered host (Gibson, 2001; Kinnaird & Hall, 2000). Kinnaird and Hall (1994), in their comprehensive book on gender and tourism, only touch on the analysis of gendered tourists, albeit towards the end of their book as an admitted ‘afterthought’. Brown (1998) asserts that more research is required which addresses how tourists encounter the gendered travel experience, how they interact with host cultures and how they interact with other tourists. In response to such claims, a small and growing body of literature has emerged which has focussed specifically on the gendered and sexualised aspects of tourists’ experiences (eg. Clift & Forrest, 1999; Dahles, 2002; Meisch, 2002; Pritchard et al., 2000; Selänniemi, 2002; Squire, 1994; Westwood, Pritchard & Morgan, 2000).

2.1.2 Keeping Women Central

This review has thus far revealed that the majority of ‘gender and tourism’ research seems to linger in the sex difference and women-centred phases. While the five phases were offered in a successive, chronological order, certain early phases are still detectable. For instance, Zalatan’s (1998) relatively recent study of wives’ influence on the travel decision-making process is firmly grounded in
the ‘add women’ phase. His consideration of wives’ decision-making seems only
to be relative and secondary to their husbands’ choices and needs.

There appears to be a blurred boundary between much of the ‘women-centred’
and ‘gender’ literature, as many of the women-focussed studies identified in the
previous section reveal a gendered context. Returning to Kinnaird and Hall’s
(1994) central theory, are not all studies of tourism and tourist behaviour at some
level gendered? This raises an important and problematic point. While advocates
of the gender scholarship phase may wish to see more ‘women and men’ studies,
there is still a need to keep women as a salient focus within tourism and leisure
research (Deem, 1999; Gibson, 2001; Henderson, 1994b). Part of the reason for
this is because women’s experiences have been left out of much of our social,
cultural and touristic history, and there are still many questions left unanswered.
Lerner (1979; p. 178) points out the importance of keeping women central to
gendered discourse:

To light up areas of historical darkness we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centered
inquiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the
general cultures shared by men and women (emphasis in original).

Furthermore, while changes in society have opened up many doors previously
closed to women, contemporary women around the world still struggle with being
oppressed and exploited. Pritchard Hughes (1994) argues that we are not yet in a
‘postfeminist’ era in which barriers have been removed entirely and parity with
men achieved. According to Pritchard Hughes, the arrival of post-feminism can
only be verified if the structures of patriarchy no longer exist to dominate and
oppress women. Burns (1994) contends that patriarchy and dominant masculine
attitudes are still strongly evident today in Australia, and that while such attitudes
may have weakened, there is evidence to suggest they are still ‘firmly entrenched’
within Australian society. Women continue to do the bulk of housework and
continue to have the primary care of children, even though they may be employed
full-time outside the modern home (Burns, 1994). Furthermore, women are still
under-represented in higher level and managerial positions, and parity in wages
has not yet been achieved. Women on average in Australia earn two thirds of what men earn, largely because of the part-time nature of much of their work and of the types of employment into which women are socialised (Probert, 1994). These facts show that studies on women must not yet be abandoned, or we risk slipping backwards again into the ‘womanless’ stage of research from which feminists have tried so hard to progress.

Furthermore, researchers working in this gender-aware age must continue to argue the point that studies about women are never only studies about women, nor are they only relevant to women (Deem, 1999; Henderson, 1994a,b). As stated previously, explorations of women’s experiences must always be related back to the broader socio-cultural milieu, and the potential of the work to better understanding social complexities as a whole must be emphasised. As long as these notions remain central to women-centred studies (such as the present thesis), then the ghettoisation which Deem (1999) laments may be avoided. The present study is one which focuses on how individual women experience solo travel, yet it also strives to find a collective thread among the women’s stories that links to the wider social and gendered context in which their travel occurs.

2.2 The (Solo) Tourist Experience

As noted in Chapter 1, solo and independent travellers have been noted as a growing market whose needs, expectations and attitudes tend to differ from the packaged, mass group of tourists (Chai, 1996; Poon, 2003). Yet relatively little empirical research has been conducted on the experiences and motivations of independent and solo travellers, apart from a small body of research on backpacker tourism (Buchanan & Rosetto, 1997; Loker, 1993; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Noy, 2004). Even less empirical research can be found on the motivations and experiences of the contemporary solo, independent female traveller (apart from a few seminal studies by Elsrud, 2001; Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; and Jordan, 1998), thus highlighting an apparent research gap.
While the current study is primarily an exploration into women’s solo travel constraints, it is also more broadly an investigation into the tourist experience. In an attempt to understand tourists and the tourist experience, researchers have focussed to a large extent on either classifying tourists or understanding their motivations. To build the contextual background of this current study of solo women travellers, some of the theories on offer which describe tourists and their motivations will briefly be explored. Specifically, this section will highlight a shift in travel consumption from ‘mass tourist’ to ‘independent travel’.

2.2.1 From ‘Mass Tourist’ to ‘Independent Traveller’

The term ‘tourist’ has been progressively deconstructed over the last three to four decades (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). Early conceptions of the tourist centred on a homogenous, mass group of people travelling for one of two reasons: leisure or business (Cohen, 1973; Yiannakis & Gibson, 1992). Being a tourist therefore meant being a ‘mass tourist’ - the “camera-toting foreigner, ignorant, passive, shallow and gullible” individual (Cohen, 1974; p. 527). Since the 1970s, however, academics working from an increasingly knowledge-based platform (Jafari, 1990) have questioned the assumed homogeneity of the tourist. It is now claimed that tourists are in fact a complex, fragmented and varied group of people, who may be classified into several different markets (Gibson, 1998; Leiper, 2003; Morley, 1990; Page, 2003; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000; Wickens, 2002; Yiannakis & Gibson, 1992).

Cohen (1972) was one of the first authors to dispel simplistic notions that all tourists were alike. In his paper on the sociology of international tourism, Cohen offered a spectrum of tourism, ranging from ‘standardised/highly institutionalised’ through to ‘individualistic/least institutionalised’. On the institutionalised side of the spectrum, individuals could be either ‘organised’ or ‘individual mass tourists’. These tourists, according to Cohen, rarely foray outside the ‘environmental bubble’ to which they are accustomed, even when on holiday. On the other, less institutionalised end of the spectrum, Cohen describes ‘drifters’ and ‘explorers’. Drifters, as described by Cohen in a later paper (1973; p. 89), were the first of the
post-modern travellers, “venturing farthest off the beaten track … [shunning] any kind of connection with the tourist establishment”. Cohen’s non-institutionalised, unstructured travellers value risk, adventure and novelty; ‘fully independent travellers’ in the true sense of the phrase.

Since Cohen’s (1972) initial typology, other classifications of tourist type have also been developed. Two well-known conceptualisations of the tourist are those put forward by Plog (1973) and Smith (1977). Plog (1973, and later in 1994) developed a psychographic typology based on a bell-curve continuum ranging from ‘allocentric’ to ‘psychocentric’ personality types. Allocentrics (other-centred individuals) are analogous to Cohen’s drifters and explorers, as they are individuals who seek novel and unique travel destinations, and who are intellectually interested in the host cultures they visit. Plog (1973) claims that allocentrics are usually the first types of tourist to visit a country, in terms of a destination’s tourism development. In contrast, psychocentrics (self-centred individuals) are more anxious and self-inhibited, preferring destinations that offer familiar types of accommodation, activities and food. Allocentrics and psychocentrics sit on respective extreme ends of the bell-curve, hence their numbers are relatively small. Mid-centrics make up the bulk of the travelling population, according to Plog, and these tourists display a more balanced combination of both allocentric and psychocentric traits.

Similar to Cohen and Plog, Smith (1977, and later in 1989) bases her tourist typology on a seven-step spectrum from ‘explorer’ to ‘charter’. In her anthropological analysis, however, she equates the type of tourist with its respective impact on the host culture as well on the host culture’s attitudes to tourists. In this model, Smith (1977) argues that the impact on a local culture is likely to increase as one moves along the spectrum from the ‘explorer’ to the ‘charter’ tourist type, and that local perceptions of visitors becomes less positive when moving in the same direction.

The tourist typologies conceptualised by Cohen (1972), Plog (1973) and Smith (1977), and others developed by Pearce (1982, 1988), are based largely on
abstractions of the authors’ own observations and opinions. Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) were some of the first researchers to develop a quantitative instrument to try and test the existence of these tourist roles and types. Based on a structured survey using a North American sample, their analysis revealed a number of tourist roles consistent with previous research. ‘Drifters’, ‘seekers’, ‘anthropologists’ and ‘explorers’ desired more unstructured, stimulating and less familiar environments, while ‘organised mass tourists’, ‘sun lovers’ and ‘independent mass tourists’ preferred environments which offered more structure, familiarity and tranquillity. Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) suggest that these tourists may simply be risk avoiders, in that they still seek stimulation, albeit in more controlled circumstances.

The typologies discussed above have been successful in reversing the stereotype that tourists are an homogenous group, and that not all tourists desire institutionalised, organised styles of travel. Today, marketers must appeal to an increasingly fragmented and alternative group of travellers (Buhalis, 2001; Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2003; Poon, 2003; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000), including independent and solo tourists who wish to organise and plan many aspects of their travel themselves. The increase in demand for independent and solo types of travel is reflective of a wider, global phenomenon referred to as ‘new tourism’ (Buhalis, 2001; Krippendorf, 1986; Poon, 2003). In this new and globalised world of tourism, ‘new tourists’ are individualistic, flexible, spontaneous, unpredictable and environmentally-conscious. Poon (2003) distinguishes new tourists from ‘old tourists’, who were unsophisticated, homogenous and predictable in their tourism consumption choices and activities. Flexibility, as perhaps the most central component of this ‘new tourism’, is important at four levels: the organisation of travel; the production and distribution of travel; the choice, booking, purchase and payment of holidays and the consumption and enjoyment of the holiday experience.


2.2.2 Tourist Motivation

Inherent in the role typologies of Cohen (1972), Plog (1973) and Smith (1977) is tourist motivation. Plog’s (1973) allocentrics were motivated by interacting with local people and having an ‘authentic’ experience, while Cohen’s organised mass tourists wanted to limit their contact with unstructured, strange environments (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). While motivation is not the main focus of the present study, the women’s travel experiences and constraints need to be considered in the context of why they travel solo.

It is generally thought that one of the prime socio-psychological motivators of leisure travel is escape: escape from mundane patterns created at home, escape from obligations, escape from the everyday working world, escape from the commonplace, escape from the uninteresting self (Cohen & Taylor, 1976; Crompton, 1979; Graburn, 1989; Graburn & Moore, 1994; Krippendorf, 1987; Leiper, 2003; MacCannell, 1989; Turner & Ash, 1976). The tourist destination, in contrast, offers an escape to something better; to another space and time where life becomes more interesting, work is forgotten, and new selves and identities can be created. According to this scenario, tourists are thrown into a state of liminality when they travel - a state of ‘in-betweenness’, play and freedom, where they may partake in activities and behaviours not undertaken at home (Lett, 1983; Turner, 1982).

MacCannell (1974, 1976), in his sociological work on tourism and the traveller, argues that what motivates people to travel is in fact merely a search for authenticity in an unauthentic life. He likens contemporary travel to a modern day ritual or pilgrimage, with masses of people seeking satisfaction and relief from the ills of modern life. In striving for authenticity, claims MacCannell, tourists continually venture to get beyond the ‘frontstage’, a touristic setting whereby attractions are apparently fabricated and unauthentic, to the ‘backstage’, where ‘real’ and authentic local lives and cultures can be observed.
Crompton (1979) classifies the intrinsic, socio-psychological impetuses for travel into seven meta-themes, namely ‘escape from a perceived mundane environment’, ‘exploration and evaluation of the self’, ‘relaxation’, ‘prestige’, ‘regression’, ‘enhancement of kinship relationships’ and ‘facilitation of social interaction’. More broadly, McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) suggest four categories of motivation: ‘physical’, ‘cultural’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘status/prestige’. Dann (1976/1977, 1981) argues that tourists are motivated both by ‘push’ factors (psychological motives such as relaxation, self-fulfilment, escape and ego-enhancement) as well as ‘pull’ factors (destinational attributes such as climate, natural features and local people). Dann’s work is important in that it suggests that multiple motivational elements, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are in effect when tourists decide to travel.

Another well-known theory of tourist motivation is Pearce’s notion of the ‘travel career ladder’ or ‘leisure ladder’ (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce & Moscardo, 1985). The travel career ladder is based on Maslow’s (1943, 1970) theories of human motivation, and sees individuals work through five travel motivational levels, beginning with ‘relaxation/bodily needs’, through to ‘stimulation’, ‘relationships’, ‘self-esteem/development’ and ‘fulfilment’. The model assumes that lower level motives must be satisfied first before reaching higher level motives, and that people will ascend the ladder as they become older and more experienced in their travel careers. Accordingly, new travellers will be concerned with rest and relaxation, but as they become more experienced in tourist settings, they will seek travel which allows for self-development and self-fulfilment. The travel career ladder is one of the first theorisations to move beyond uni-dimensional thinking on motives to demonstrate the dynamic and changing nature of motivation over the course of an individual’s life.

Arguing that tourism motivation is but one part of broader leisure theory, Iso-Ahola’s (1980, 1982) work on leisure and recreation motivation has also influenced tourism theorists. Iso-Ahola posits that any leisure activity, including tourism, comprises two motivational factors: ‘approach’ (seeking) and ‘avoidance’ (escape). When thinking about leisure and tourism activities,
individuals wish to satisfy intrinsic motives such as achievement and self-development at the same time as wishing to leave the everyday, routine environment behind them. An important element of Iso-Ahola’s model, like the travel career ladder, is that tourists do not remain static and unchanging in their motivational states. Tourists may commence their travels with certain motivational forces in mind, and then find that other desires and needs may dominate later on. Furthermore, the model acknowledges that socialisation forces are important in determining motivation, in addition to intrinsic, personal factors.

While such motivational theories are useful in describing the general reasons for why people travel, none of them has specifically addressed the question of why people, male or female, might choose to travel alone. In an era when the numbers of single people are increasing and individuals are more likely to undertake their leisure activities alone (Bond, 1997; Foo, 1999; Hannen, 2000; Jordan, 1998; Scott, 2002), the dearth of literature on the motivations of solo travellers is surprising, but a small number of studies are starting to address this gap.

### 2.2.2.1: Why do People Travel Solo?

As outlined in Chapter 1, very few studies have examined the needs, experiences and challenges of people who choose to travel alone, or women who travel solo. Mehmetoglu, Dann and Larsen’s (2001) small-scale study on solitary travellers in Norway appears to be one of the first to examine explicitly the motivations of people who travel alone. They distinguish between people who travel alone by default (that is, those who could not find a suitable travel companion) and those who travel alone by choice. For the latter group, a number of social and psychological motives for solo travel were identified through in-depth interviews, including ease, freedom, flexibility, spontaneity and solitude. The results also showed that these solitary tourists were not travelling alone for a sense of isolation, but that going solo actually allowed for increased interaction with local people and/or other travellers.
Riley (1988) studied the motivations and experiences of long-term budget travellers (or backpackers, as they would be referred to today). While not explicitly a study of solo travel behaviour, Riley (p. 324) found that most of the travellers she interviewed preferred to travel alone, “preferring freedom of itinerary and shunning the constraints of traveling [sic] on a permanent basis with someone with different timetables, budget limitations, and resource management styles”. Most relevant to the current study is that Riley’s research revealed that women, more so than men, wanted to travel alone for a sense of independence and autonomy; to see if they ‘could do it by themselves’.

A handful of studies have further explored the motivations of solo women travellers. In their focus groups with single British women travellers aged 30 to 55, Stone and Nichol (1999) found that their participants shared motivations with other travellers, such as social interaction, escape, self-esteem and recreation. However, many of these motives were directly related to gender, particularly in terms of the women wanting to achieve self-esteem to overcome a lack of confidence. Social contact also proved to be an important motivating factor for both British and American solo female travellers interviewed by Gibson and Jordan (1998b), as was filling a gap in their lives left by divorce or children leaving the home. According to Elsrud’s (1998) study of Swedish female backpackers, travelling alone was viewed as a ‘time out’ from everyday structures at home or as the last free time they would have before becoming partnered. In addition, solo travel allowed these women a sense of freedom and control over their own time and decision-making. Similar motivations were noted as part of a study involving female backpackers in Australia (Hillman, 1999), which found that many of the women were travelling alone to escape ties at home and to simply prove to themselves that they could travel in a country by themselves.

In summary, this section has traced the emergence of independent, solo and non-institutionalised forms of travel. More specifically, motivational theory was examined as a means of providing the context for why individuals (especially women) choose to travel solo. In the following sections of this thesis, women’s
travel will be examined more closely, as will the constraints they face in their
tourist and leisure experiences.

2.3 A History of Women, Solo Travel and Constraint

Following from the review of gendered tourism and the solo tourist experience,
this section aims to focus on the experiences and constraints of women travellers,
beginning with an historical perspective. The following annotated history has two
key goals. First, a historical review such as this can redress what has been termed
by some historians as “a major omission in the historical record” (Towner, 1994;
p. 725), the omission being women’s involvement and contribution to travel and
exploration. Lerner (1979) argues that the omission of women in history
(including the history of tourism and travel) is a result of not asking the right
questions. This has effectively meant that history has only been considered in
male-centric terms. Such sentiments are echoed by Stanley (1988; p. 19), who
believes that “we cannot adequately understand ‘now’ if we do not know
something about its relationship with ‘then’ and about how the one became the
other”. The second goal of this historical background is that it adequately frames
the context for the current study on contemporary female solo travel.

Western women have been travelling, and travelling alone, for centuries.
Historically, however, travel and pioneering have been construed as the sole
preserve of men (Craik, 1997; Dann, 1999; Hamalian, 1981; Robinson, 1990;
Tinling, 1989). Despite their significant contributions and achievements, women
have generally been overlooked in the history of travel and exploration (Clarke,
1988a; Towner, 1994). As Clarke (1998a; p. 78) notes, “for centuries the oceanic
voyage and the journey to the interior were wholly, solely and exclusively men’s
business”. Women were indeed travelling, yet their voices within the history of
tourism are only beginning to be heard. A recent resurgence in the publication of
historical accounts of women’s solo travel attests to the fact that women have
been travelling and exploring alone for many centuries (see Aitken, 1987; Birkett,
Historically, it has been said that travel was usually a major life event for an individual (Gilbert, 1991). The earliest known female travellers were no different, as they were primarily pilgrims making the journey to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Helena made her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 327 AD (Hunt, 1982), while the first documented female travel account is attributed to the abbess Egeria (or Etheria), a Roman citizen who made the same journey around 383 AD (Birkett, 1991). After this point in time, there appears to be a large gap in the available historical literature on solo women travellers until 1413, when an Englishwoman named Margery Kempe left her husband of twenty years, announced celibacy, and departed for a pilgrimage which included the European Alps and Jerusalem (Russell, 1986). While not in search of Christian piety, Celia Fiennes, another upper-class Englishwoman, departed from London in 1698 for her ‘Great Journey’ - a solo traipe (with servants) throughout all the counties of England and Scotland (Morris, 1985).

It has been said that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the daughter of an Earl, paved the way for modern independent female travellers. In 1716 she joined her husband, the British Ambassador to Turkey (Pratt, 1992), creating a wave of shock amongst members of London’s elite society. While she arrived in Turkey as an ‘accompanist’ to her husband, she soon ventured out alone. Her journeys were captured in a series of letters, which were later published after her death (Grundy, 1997). Not ten years after Montagu departed for Turkey, Lady Hester Stanthorpe set out alone to the Eastern Mediterranean upon the double deaths of her caretaker and uncle, the British Prime Minister, and her fiancée (Clarke, 1988a).

By the mid 1800s, the growing numbers of independent women travellers could be referred to as a notable ‘trend’ (Pemble, 1987). The nineteenth century reign of England’s Queen Victoria in particular has been heralded as the golden age of travel, and this golden age enveloped women travellers as well (Robinson, 1994).
The Victorian travellers of this age were said to be privileged women, the often sheltered daughters of well-educated and highly regarded families (Clarke, 1988a, b). No longer were they travelling merely as accompanists to their husbands, however; these Victorian women were travelling independently and alone.

Much of the historical literature on women and travel readily pertains to the Victorian time, primarily because the women who were fortunate enough to travel at this time recorded their experiences in great detail. Emily Lowe took great pleasure in travelling to Scandinavia and Italy as a female ‘unprotected’ in the mid 1850s (Lowe, 1857). There was also Mary Kingsley, who, after the death of her ailing parents for whom she had been primary caretaker, set sail in 1893 at the age of 30 for her first solo journey to West Africa (Kingsley, 1897/2002). All of these women, like many others who travelled and explored, wrote and published their accounts and experienced success within the travel writing genre. These written contributions stand as testament to the fact that women were indeed travelling at a time when men dominated exploration, scientific expeditions and geography.

Arguably the most renowned female traveller and author of the Victorian era is Isabella Bird. In 1854, her doctor diagnosed her with depression and decided that the best cure would be a lengthy ocean voyage (Clarke, 1988b). She departed promptly for North America at the age of 40, and a series of letters back to her sister in England soon caught the eye of publishers. ‘A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains’ was printed in 1879 (Bird, 1879). Isabella Bird’s further independent travels took her to Hawaii, Korea, Japan, Persia, Malaysia and China, and all of these journeys resulted in major publications (see Bird, 1890, 1897/1970, 1880/1973, 1891, 1883, 1899, respectively, for accounts of these journeys).

Yet it was not only well-to-do women who were able to travel in the Victorian era. Thomas Cook is often referred to as the ‘father’ of mass tourism, having opened up travel to Britain’s middle- and lower-classes through a variety of guided tours. (Dessaix, 2000; Enloe, 1989). What is perhaps not so well-known is that Cook’s tours also enabled women to travel alone in a time when it was considered socially unacceptable to do so (Craik, 1997).
Pemble (1987) notes that women travelling alone were a more common sight by the early years of the twentieth century. Freya Stark, a well-known female traveller of this era, dedicated her life to travel and the professional study of other cultures, particularly those of the Middle East (Stark, 1936, 1958). Evelyn Cheesman, the entomologist, travelled widely throughout Oceania, studying and collecting in Tahiti, the New Hebrides and New Guinea (Fenton Huie, 1990). It should be noted that while historical anthologies of women’s travel tend to focus on English-speaking women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds also contributed significantly to world exploration (Garcia-Ramon & Albet i Mas, 2002). During the 1920s, the Frenchwoman Alexandra David-Neel became the first Western and the first European woman to visit the sacred Tibetan city of Lhasa in 1923 (Hall & Kinnaird, 1994). She wrote several accounts of her time with the Buddhist people of Tibet (David-Neel, 1936; 1927/1940). In 1846, Ida Pfeiffer set out from Germany at the age of 44 to visit the Amazon, China and Tahiti (Feifer, 1985). The Swiss woman Isabelle Eberhardt and Spaniard Aurora Betrana both wrote detailed narratives of their journeys in Northern Africa (Garcia-Ramon & Albet i Mas, 2002).

Australian women have also played an important role in the history of solo travel, no doubt an extension and reflection of (white) Australia’s colonial history of exploration, exploitation and journey. Indeed, “journeys and quests have played an important part in the formation of Australian society … and also in the establishment of national identity” (Lucas & Forster, 1992; p. vii). According to Rowley (1991; p. 67), Australia’s colonial history is embedded in the myth of the journey, through stories of “immigrants, pioneers, drovers, shearers, gold-seekers, bushrangers and swagmen”. However, these explorers were usually men, in that they could access the mobility and freedom necessary to make the journey. While evidently some women did access that mobility and explore the country’s interior, these journeys were generally overshadowed “by the great sweeping movements of men” (Rowley, 1991; p. 67).
Until relatively recently, overseas travel by Australians has traditionally been a male exploit (Colebatch, 1999). However, the middle part of last century, particularly the 1950s and 1960s, witnessed a large increase in the numbers of middle and upper-class single young women leaving Australia to ‘go abroad’ (Pesman, 1996; Warner-Smith, 2000). Going abroad for these women usually meant making the solo journey by ship to the United Kingdom and Europe, in search of understanding their cultural heritage (Warner-Smith, 2000). According to Brown (1995), many of these women were escaping what they saw as the cultural deficiency and isolation of Australian social life, in search of the artistic and sophisticated grandeur of historic cities like London and Paris. Ros Pesman (1996; p. 1) recalls growing up in the 1950s: “My time, education and class deemed that I should believe that everything that was important lay on the other side of the world”. While escape from the ‘cultural cringe’ was no doubt a prime factor in many Australian women’s decision to leave the country, the true motivations for their journeys often lay with a chance to experience a sense of freedom, autonomy and to escape from the bonds of duty to home and family constraining women in 1950s and 60s Australia (Brown, 1995; MacKinnon, 1997).

The above review of women’s role in the history of travel supports Tinling’s (1989) assertion that “no longer can exploration be considered an exclusively male field” (p. xxv). Very recent accounts in the mid to late twentieth century provide further evidence that contemporary women are continuing to explore and travel alone, recording their journeys and publishing their accounts. Women such as Dervla Murphy (1965), Mary Morris (1988), and the Australians Robyn Davidson (1980) and Sorrel Wilby (1988) are now renowned female travellers of the modern era.

2.3.1 Post-Colonialist Critiques

Several works have sought to deconstruct and critique the role of the female traveller (Aitchison, 2000; Hall & Kinnaird, 1994; Ghose, 1998; Mills, 1991;
Pratt, 1992; Richter, 1995). As Hall and Kinnaird (1994; p. 200) lament, any
assessment of women travellers, past or present, undertaken in the post-
structuralist, post-modern era is “fogged with contradictions”. Despite the
achievements of these historical women travellers, they have not escaped criticism
for their role as members of an imperialist English realm. Post-colonialist critics
(eg. Garcia-Ramon & Albet i Mas, 2002; Ghose, 1998, Mills, 1991) assert that the
female traveller’s search for self was decidedly bound up with elitist, Western
bourgeoisie notions of pursuing individual definition over all else. As Ghose
(1998; p. 4) points out:

What needs to be looked at in more depth is how notions of gender were bound up with
hegemonic ideologies, and how women were both made an instrument of, and were
complicitous with, the politics of imperialism.

There is a danger in assuming that female travellers, simply because they were
women oppressed by their own patriarchal societies, would display an instinctive
empathy with the plights of minorities living in countries under the British
Imperialist system (Garcia-Ramon & Albet i Mas, 2002; Ghose, 1998). Such
expectations, reflected in several ‘women and travel’ anthologies, reflect what
Blake (1990; p. 347) describes as “the hope that women, colonized themselves by
gender, might recognize and oppose colonization based on race”. While many
publications herald women travellers as intrepid, heroic and generally sympathetic
to their hosts’ concerns, post-colonialist authors have criticised this tendency to
extol the virtues of the lone female tourist without linking these women to the
class and race-based ideologies that constructed their gazes (Ghose; 1998; Hall &

As products of their social eras, many women travellers relied upon distinctions
between themselves and the ‘Other’, believing that they were racially and
spiritually superior to their hosts (Birkett, 1991). Isabella Bird, for example, was
enamoured of the Hawaiian people and was sympathetic to their cause for land
rights. At the same time, she referred to tattooed Hawaiian women in her writings
as ‘crones’ who spoke in ‘weird tones’, and to ancient Hawaiian temples as sites
of ‘horror’ (Grant, cited in Bird, 1890/1998; p. xiii). Likewise, Lucie-Duff Gordon referred to Egyptians as ‘feudal’ and ‘medieval’ (cited in Mills, 1991; p. 89). These types of descriptions are typical of colonial, imperialist writings in which ‘natives’ are reduced to a puerile, childlike people in need of British development and assistance (Mills, 1991).

There is little doubt that women travelling in the 18th and 19th centuries were usually privileged and wealthy, and that many carried with them imperialist and racist attitudes. Nonetheless, they still struggled in many ways that male travellers did not. Gibson (2001; p. 22) questions just how ‘privileged’ these women travellers really were, given the raft of social, economic and practical constraints that they faced prior to and during their journeys.

2.3.2 Historical Constraints on Women’s Solo Travel

_A Lady an explorer? A traveller in skirts?_

_The notion’s just a trifle too seraphic:_

_Let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts;_

_But they mustn’t, can’t, and shan’t be geographic._

(from cartoon in _Punch_, 1893, cited in Robinson, 1994; p. 1)

While women have been travelling alone for centuries, their explorations were not without constraint and challenge. The opening ditty from the English cartoon magazine _Punch_ reveals the level of societal scorn towards Victorian women travellers. Many of the constraints faced by women travellers of this time related to gendered social expectations and existing notions of femininity (Aitchison, MacLeod & Shaw, 2000; Foster & Mills, 2002). Victorian England was also a socially confining, if not ‘claustrophobic’ era for women (Frederick & McLeod, 1993; p. xix), restricted by sexual mores which bound women to home life and domesticity (Massey, 1994). As Clifford (1997) claims: “women travelers were
forced to conform, masquerade, or rebel discreetly within a set of normatively male definitions and experiences” (p. 32).

The socialised sex role of the eternally feminine Victorian ‘lady’ worked to constrain women’s travel in several ways. If travel generally was viewed as socially unacceptable by Victorian standards, then the idea of a woman who travelled alone seemed to be particularly aberrant, worthy of ruining a ‘lady’s’ highly-regarded social reputation (Robinson, 1990). The solo female traveller could only be made more socially acceptable if she was labelled as eccentric or unconventional (Dessaix, 2000; Pesman, 1996; Squire, 1995). Uncomplimentary terms associated with solo female travellers, such as ‘globe-trotteress’ or ‘adventuress’, were derisive and worked to strip these women of plausibility (Aitken, 1987; Mills, 1991; Tinling, 1989). Denuded of the heroic male qualities of the ‘adventurer’, the ‘adventuress’ was viewed as a lesser being. As Aitken (1987; p. 11) explains: “to be an adventurer is a heroic business of travel and swashbuckler; to be an adventuress is to advance through society by dubious means, usually sexual”.

At this social time, a woman’s identity was tied firmly to the home (Massey, 1994). As an activity which clearly took place outside of the home, and usually far from it, the idea of women travelling challenged the ‘ambulatory/stationary’ double standard which held rein for many women living in Victorian times (Eichler, 1980). Eichler (1980; p. 16) defines a double standard as “all norms, rules and practices which evaluate, reward and punish identical behaviour of women and men differentially”. Thus, the act of travelling was interpreted differently, and resulted in different consequences. Travel for men was seen to be brave, heroic and acceptable; travel by women was unladylike, unfeminine and socially unacceptable. Women were expected to stay at home and keep the domestic fires burning (be stationary), yet it was acceptable for men to venture into the world (be ambulatory).

Women, particularly in the Victorian era, were also bound by an ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan, 1982), which relegates women to the primary care for others because of
their assumed ‘natural’ nurturing abilities. As a result, a woman who chose to travel alone faced criticism for daring to ‘outstep her proper sphere’ (Jones, 1997; p. 209), a sphere which was limited to the domestic, the private and the secluded. In ‘The Art of Governing a Wife’ (1747, cited in Dolan, 2001; p.7) men were encouraged “to get; to go abroad and get his living; deal with all men; to manage all things without doors”, while women were supposed “to lay up and save; look to the house; talk to few; take of all within.”

Many of the women who travelled alone in the Victorian era were unattached and/or unmarried women freed from the domestic charges of caring for others. Those who were married, however, sometimes experienced feelings of guilt for wanting to travel, and especially for writing about their explorations. Esme Scott-Stevenson, for instance, feeling guilty that her husband was unaware of her prospective plans for going into print, dedicated all of her travel accounts to him as a form of appeasement to counteract the inevitable societal embarrassment that would ensue (Hall & Kinnaird, 1994; Robinson, 1990).

These women who travelled, and then dared to write of their journeys, were further constrained in other regards. In the male-dominated genre of travel writing (Frederick & McLeod, 1993), women’s travel accounts were invariably regarded as fanciful rather than serious narratives, as was the case with Alexandra David-Neel’s accounts of Tibet. One male critic (Henry Tuckerman, 1864, cited in Mills, 1991; p. 120) asserted that “there are few situations in modern life more suggestive of the ludicrous than that of a woman ‘of a certain age’ professedly visiting a country for the purpose of critically examining and reporting it and its people”.

If Victorian women could overcome and negotiate the array of societal constraints, they then were often faced with a lack of financial backing and support to which their male counterparts were privy. Women were never explicitly commissioned to travel, so they had to secure their own finance (Garcia-Ramon & Albet i Mas, 2002). Many women had substantial amounts of money left to them by the death of parents and caretakers, and this enabled their journeys.
However, women suffered a lack of the important connections and support mechanisms which male explorers could source as a means to assist travel (Birkett, 1991; Blake, 1990). By way of an example of this lack of support, male bastions of exploration such as the Royal Geographic Society forbade women becoming members of the organisation until the early 20th century (Blake, 1990; Tinling, 1989).

It has been reasoned that women travellers have had to negotiate an entirely different set of ‘discursive pressures’, or constraints, than have men (Mills, 1991). However, these women did travel and in doing so were able to resist and challenge, whether consciously or unconsciously, gendered Victorian notions of ‘ladyhood’ and ‘femininity’. The question remains as to what enabled some women to negotiate the array of obstacles that stood between their desire to travel and their departure. A number of answers can be suggested. First, many of the women who were able to travel were part of the privileged middle and upper social classes, a societal position which no doubt enabled them time, money and status needed to travel abroad. Second, these women were predominantly childless, thus free from the roles and responsibilities related to raising children. As Dawson (2001; p.12) wrote in her account of early women travellers to New Zealand:

‘Lady travellers’ seldom had children. Practical realities certainly militated against such freedom of movement for mothers. Traveling for enjoyment, with or without husbands, was generally an option only for the childless.

Third, these ‘privileged’ daughters of Victorian society were usually only able to travel as a result of the death of parents, caretakers or husbands, for whom these women had been primary caretakers. Such events essentially freed women from their domestic duties and responsibilities (Hall & Kinnaird, 1994). Finally, the death of relatives also allowed women to use the sums of money bequeathed to them for the purposes of travel (Pesman, 1996).
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It should be noted, however, that each woman’s constraints would have been experienced differently, and at differing levels of intensity. For some women, the level of opposition towards their desires may not have been as oppressive as for others. Moreover, personality and strength of determination and resolve would also have played a part in women’s abilities to negotiate and achieve satisfying life experiences through travel (Pesman, 1996).

Given that the act of world travel is indeed a very public activity, the fact that women travelled at all away from the private sphere of home demonstrated a form of resistance (Ghose, 1998). Venturing out into the world in the 18th and 19th centuries, as discussed previously, was the preserve of men and only deemed acceptable for a woman if she was accompanied by a male chaperone (Davidson, 2001; Eichler, 1980). Squire (1995), in her appraisal of women travellers in the Canadian Rockies in the late nineteenth century, asserts that through travel, women could transgress and challenge traditional and conservative gender roles. Reflected in the works of nineteenth century female travellers such as Isabella Bird, travel gave women a chance to move beyond such patriarchal prescriptions of appropriate feminine behaviour, and get a taste for (male) exploration. Isabella Bird noted in a letter to her sister: “I am doing what a woman can hardly ever do – leading a life fit for a man” (cited in Kaye, 1999; title page).

Clearly, women who were able to travel in the Victorian era were ‘privileged’ with the advantages of money, class and race. However, this discussion has shown that their journeys were fraught with constraint, not simply because they were female, but because of gendered constructions of what was appropriate female behaviour. As it has been demonstrated in this section, solo travel was not deemed a socially acceptable activity for a woman. But what of contemporary female travellers? It was argued in Chapter 1 that social and political circumstances have changed greatly for women, allowing them relatively unprecedented access to education, income and choice in life decisions. Does the modern solo woman traveller face similar constraints to her historical counterparts, or are they of an entirely different nature today? Recent research by Gilmartin (1997) begins to address this question. Her comparative study of
historical and modern women’s travel guides reveals that despite significant changes in society for women, contemporary female solo travellers appear to be constrained in quite similar ways to their Victorian predecessors. Gilmartin (1997; p. 3) concludes that:

> Historically and today, the women who travels alone must negotiate an array of challenges, including handling the practical logistics involved in travel, having the self-confidence to set out alone to unfamiliar locales, facing the social pressures on a woman transgressing traditional constructions of femininity, and accepting the risks to physical safety which travel involves.

Therefore, while the taboos and constraints of women travelling in previous eras have generally eased, elements of constraint and vulnerability still exist and are carried over (albeit in different ways) into the contemporary female travel experience. Exploring these issues is a key aim of this study, but must be informed by a theoretical discussion of ‘constraint’ and how it impacts on modern leisure and travel.

### 2.4 Leisure Constraints Theory

Over the last two decades, the study of constraints has made significant contributions to the knowledge base of the leisure studies field (Jackson & Scott, 1999). The idea that people face constraints and limitations which can result in non-participation is now a widely accepted notion in the leisure studies literature (Jackson, 1988; Wade, 1985). There exists an established and growing body of theory to guide researchers in their inquiry about how constraints impact on leisure (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996). This section reviews the leisure constraints literature, highlighting specifically the emergence of negotiation as a concept which has challenged the notion that constraints always foreclose participation in leisure activities.
2.4.1 What are ‘Constraints’?

At the centre of constraints theory is a notion that people have the freedom and the desire to participate in leisure, but that certain ‘constraints’ may hinder that freedom, desire and participation (Raymore, 2002). Constraints have been defined as factors that “inhibit people’s ability to participate in leisure activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of leisure services, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction” (Jackson, 1998; p. 203). One of the earliest theories on constraint (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985) was that there was an inverse relationship between perceived constraint and the frequency of satisfying leisure experiences. That is, if all other things are equal, the person who perceives fewer constraints will have a happier and more satisfied leisure life. On this assumption, it then becomes the responsibility of leisure providers to remove constraints so that people have unfettered access to leisure.

Research throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s conceived of constraints almost entirely as ‘barriers’, or as insurmountable obstacles which stood between an individual’s leisure preference and his or her ability to participate (Goodale & Witt, 1989; Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985; Jackson, 1988; Jackson & Searle, 1985; Witt & Goodale, 1981). Within this body of literature, there was little mention of intensity or level of constraint, only that constraint existed (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). As a result, early theorists assumed that the presence of constraints would always lead to non-participation. Thus, the removal of barriers was the only way in which participation could be achieved. Hence, much attention was turned to how leisure and recreation providers could effectively remove those barriers to allow for a clear passage to participation.

Constraints researchers have generally busied themselves by attempting to classify constraints according to their type and nature (Jackson, 1988). Several classification models of leisure constraint type have been proposed, including ‘internal/external’ (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1989; Searle & Jackson, 1985), ‘antecedent/intervening’ (Henderson, Stalnaker & Taylor, 1988; Jackson, 1990), ‘objective/subjective’ (Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992),
‘social-personal’, ‘social-cultural’ and ‘physical’ (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985) and ‘proscriptive/prescriptive’ (Shogan, 2002). The nature or level of constraints has also been examined. For instance,Iso-Ahola and Mannell (1985) suggested that constraints could be either temporary or permanent in nature. Perhaps the most widely promulgated constraints classification model is that proposed by Crawford and Godbey (1987), who conceived of three overarching types of constraints, namely:

1. **Interpersonal**: constraints which pertain to a person’s relationship with others and society. Examples are work and/or family expectations and interactions, lack of suitable participation partners or companions and so on;

2. **Intrapersonal**: constraints which refer to an individual’s own psychological and subjective perceptions or attitudes that may limit his or her participation in desired leisure activities (usually at the preference stage). This category includes factors such as personal attributes, lack of self-confidence, reference group attitudes, anxiety, energy levels and lack of perceived ability, and

3. **Structural**: constraints that pertain to existing physical and demographic factors which work to prevent actual participation in leisure activities. Structural constraints include a lack of time and money, and also relate to issues like climate, transportation, age and life stage. Crawford and Godbey espoused that structural constraints are the most common constraint faced by individuals when accessing participation to leisure.

Expanding later on this framework, Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) offered a model which proposed that these three constraint types are actually encountered in a hierarchical sequence (see Figure 2.1). Intrapersonal constraints are encountered first, and affect leisure preferences. If these constraints are successfully dealt with, interpersonal constraints then present themselves, effecting a barrier between preferences and participation. Only when
interpersonal constraints are overcome does a person then face structural constraints. Leisure participation can thus occur only when all three types of constraints are ‘negotiated’. In this progressive hierarchy, interpersonal constraints are those that a person encounters first, thus they are posited as the most important in determining a person’s ability to negotiate.

![Diagram of Crawford, Jackson & Godbey’s (1991) Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints]

As stated previously, early constructions of constraint spoke of ‘barriers’ or impenetrable forces which foreclose participation in desired leisure activities. Models such as the one offered in Figure 2.1 by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) recognise that people can in fact effectively deal with their constraints, but that they do so in hierarchical manner. Based on such developments, leisure researchers now refer to constraints as being negotiable, rather than as insurmountable barriers which exert an influence only between preference and participation (Jackson, 1991). It has also been offered that not only do constraints impact between preference and participation, but they can also affect the leisure experience itself (Jackson, 1991). In the last decade or so, theorisations of constraint have developed and matured, so that over-simplified and linear assumptions about the impact of constraint are now largely avoided, in favour of more complex and theoretically savvy interpretations (Jackson, 1993, 2000).

### 2.4.2 The Emergence of Negotiation

The concept of negotiation was borne from the results of studies by Shaw, Bonen and McCabe (1991) and Kay and Jackson (1991). Both studies found that
reported constraints did not necessarily lead to non-participation and that the presence of more constraints did not mean less leisure. Such findings challenged earlier assumptions about the nature of constraints, and demanded more complex ways of thinking about the constraint-participation issue.

Based on such concerns, Jackson, Crawford and Godbey (1993) proposed a negotiation model, based on their earlier intrapersonal/interpersonal/structural constraints framework. The authors’ central proposition was that participation in leisure is usually not dependent on a complete absence of constraints, but on how people negotiate through those constraints. In this way, constraints were more likely to modify the level of participation rather than foreclose it entirely. Jackson, Crawford and Godbey’s work further highlighted the importance of motivations as related to people’s willingness to deal with constraint and challenge in leisure.

Jackson and Rucks (1995) appear to be the first to empirically test for the existence of negotiation. In an exploratory, quantitative study of Canadian high school students, Jackson and Rucks found eight categories of constraint related to ‘commitments and time’; ‘lack of skills’; ‘problems with interpersonal relations’; ‘health and fitness’; ‘geographical accessibility’; ‘cost/lack of money’; ‘facilities’ and ‘other’. Commitments and a lack of time proved to be the most prevalent constraints for these students. Strategies employed to negotiate these constraints were divided into two categories: ‘behavioural’ and ‘cognitive’. Cognitive strategies included changing one’s attitude or outlook, and students reported such techniques as ignoring or putting up with problems and trying to remain positive. Behavioural strategies related to modifying or changing behaviours and activities to ensure participation.

More recently, Hubbard and Mannell (2001) used an interactive approach to operationalise the recreation negotiation processes of corporate employees. Constraints were measured according to Crawford and Godbey’s (1987) intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraint types. Negotiation strategies grouped under four main headings, namely ‘time management’, ‘skill acquisition’,
‘interpersonal coordination’ and ‘financial’. Four models were offered and tested, each of which interlinked negotiation with constraint, motivation and participation in different ways.

Through discussions of negotiation, the debate surrounding participation versus non-participation has broadened to incorporate consideration of the leisure experience as a whole. Furthermore, the notion of negotiation suggests that people are finding ways and strategies to deal with their constraints not only to access participation, but to allow continuing participation over the course of their lives (Little, 2002). Growing interest in the concept of negotiation has resulted in an extension and re-analysis of how we think about constraints. It is now widely acknowledged that rarely do people abandon participating in activities simply because they face constraints and challenges (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993b; Jackson & Scott, 1990).
2.5 Constraints, Women and Solo Travel

As noted in the previous section, constraints to leisure participation have been well-documented and constraints theory is now viewed as a distinct and theoretically sophisticated sub-field of inquiry within the leisure studies field (Jackson, 2000). Similar to leisure participants, tourists’ choices and decisions are also never entirely unrestrained. As argued in Chapter 1, both tourists and leisure seekers are affected by similar social, economic and psychological influences and by similar motivational impulses. It is surprising, then, that tourist behaviour has rarely been examined from a constraints perspective, remaining an area of research still relatively unchartered (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999).

One probable explanation for this is that the academic fields of tourism and leisure studies have emerged from differing concerns. Leisure studies as a discipline has been firmly grounded in ideologies of helping (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985) and welfare (Moore, Cushman & Simmons, 1995), concerned from its inception with advancing and bettering the lives of individuals. Tourism, as a field of study, has not typically shared this concern with improving the life and lot of the individual, focusing more on understanding consumer behaviour, economic impacts or other business processes (Botterill, 2001; Pritchard, 2001). There are some notable exceptions to this, such as the work by Haukeland (1990) on social tourism and the social right to travel. Haukeland defines ‘social tourism’ as meaning that “everybody, regardless of economic or social situation, should have the opportunity to go on vacation” (p. 178), and that the social loss from not having a vacation should be compensated by the state. His work, however, appears to be one of the first studies to forge a link between leisure, social welfare and holiday travel. As a result, constraints that might hinder the tourist’s experience have not been a prime consideration until relatively recently. This section examines the limited literature which has applied constraints theory to tourism, making specific reference to the role of constraint in women’s experience of leisureed travel.
2.5.1 Constraints Research in Tourism

Tourism authors generally refer to constraints in the context of how they impede participation in travel (Gilbert, 1991; Haukeland, 1990; Leiper, 2003; Um & Crompton, 1992). According to Leiper (2003, p. 65), before a person may embark on a trip, he or she must be free from an array of general inhibitors, such as “caring for the sick, infirm, infant or animal members of a household, and psychological inhibitions such as agoraphobia”. Leiper does not mention how one might go about overcoming such constraints, or even why they might exist, but at least acknowledges their presence. Gilbert (1991) refers to ‘filterers’ that constrain an individual’s demand for travel even though motivation may exist. In one of the first studies of its kind, Haukeland (1990) conducted a study of why people do not travel. Using Norway as a case study, he found that Norwegians generally did not travel for a number of reasons, including that travel was perceived to be too strenuous, too long and time-consuming or because they could not access time away from work.

Other tourism studies talk about ‘barriers’ or ‘inhibitors’ to the travel experience. For example, McKercher et al. (2003) examined the role of travel agents in acting as either facilitators or inhibitors of travel for people with disabilities. They identified a range of ‘internal’ and ‘exogenous’ barriers to tourism participation faced by persons with a disability when dealing with travel agents. Hunter-Jones (2003) also examined ‘inhibitors’ on the holiday-taking behaviours of young people with cancer, finding that a range of ‘intrinsic’, ‘environmental’ and ‘interactive’ limitations impacted on their pre-travel and during-travel experiences. Yet neither of these studies adopted an explicitly leisure constraints framework when investigating the travel barriers of these specific social sub-groups.

A handful of studies, however, have begun to adopt a more focussed constraints approach to the study of leisured tourism behaviour and the tourist experience. Leisure constraints approaches have been adopted to examine tourist participation in certain types of activity, such as skiing (Hudson, 2000; Hudson & Gilbert, 1999) and nature-based tourism (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002). Leisure
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Constraints frameworks have also been used to further understand the tourist experiences of certain social sub-groups, such as seniors (Blazey, 1987; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Zimmer, Brayley & Searle, 1995) and tourists with a disability (Smith, 1987). Constraints approaches have also been applied to the study of tourist seasonality (Hinch & Jackson, 2000) and general tourist decision-making behaviour (Dellaert, Ettema & Lindh, 1998; Um & Crompton, 1992).

Smith (1987) was one of the first authors to link leisure constraints theory to the tourist experience, through his discussion of the challenges faced by tourists with a disability. Grounded in early leisure theory which emphasised constraints as insurmountable barriers to participation, Smith’s argument was that all tourists “experience barriers to leisure participation that undermine their sense of freedom and feelings of personal control” (p. 376). His work did recognise, however, that tourists with a disability may experience a disproportionate number of barriers relative to other able-bodied tourists. Constraints could be ‘intrinsic’ (psychological, physical and cognitive barriers, such as lack of knowledge or lack of social skills); ‘environmental’ (external barriers imposed by the social or physical milieu in which a person lives, such as societal attitudes and transportation access) or ‘interactive’ (interactions between tourist and the immediate milieu, such as communication and perceptions of skill). Most notably, Smith’s work confirmed that it is not only the travel decision-making process which can be affected by constraints, but also the tourist experience itself.

Dellaert, Ettema and Lindh (1998) examined constraints on the travel decision-making process. They distinguished between three types of constraint based on travel choice components, including destination, accommodation, travel companions, mode of travel, departure date and duration. These three types of constraint were ‘authority’ (imposed by law or institutions, eg. work/school hours), ‘coupling’ (restrictions faced by household members, friends and colleagues) or ‘capacity’ (availability of travel options and modes; money resources). All of these constraints were seen to operate outside of the tourist’s direct control.
A number of tourism-related studies have drawn directly from the leisure theory, adopting Crawford and Godbey’s (1987) conceptualisation of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints. Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter (2002), for example, tested Crawford and Godbey’s model in the context of participation in nature-based tourism. Intrapersonal constraints related to travel information, safety and skills to participate, while interpersonal constraints included family interest, influence of friends and travel companions. Money, weather, road conditions, time, geographical distance and equipment were identified as key structural constraints to participation in nature-based tourism. Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter’s (2002) results lend general support to Crawford and Godbey’s model, and confirm its applicability to the context of tourist behaviour and experience.

While this limited amount of research has begun to further our understanding of the role and impact of constraint on the tourist experience, there are still many research gaps left unfilled. The dearth of literature in this area has resulted in Hudson and Gilbert (1999) referring to constraints as a ‘neglected dimension’ (p. 69), but some researchers have recently heralded constraints approaches as useful for studying solo women travellers in particular (Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b). Beyond Gibson and Jordan’s work, however, there has been little attention paid to investigating the impact of constraint on women’s touristic experiences.

2.5.2 Constraints on Women’s Leisure and Touristic Experiences

Central to this discourse on women’s constraints to leisure is the notion that women and men perceive and experience constraints in different ways, and that women may face constraints of a more particularised, unique and limiting nature (Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992; Henderson et al, 1989; Little, 2002). Some empirical studies have found that women in fact face more constraints to their leisure participation than do men (Deem, 1982; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Searle & Jackson, 1985). Searle and Jackson (1985), for example, discovered that women reported constraints such as shyness, family commitments, lack of information, lack of transport and physical inability more often than did men. Other research has shown that women may be more influenced than men by constraints such as gender role expectations, lack of educational opportunities, primary care for family, body image and a lack of confidence and skills (Henderson, 1997; Henderson et al., 1989; Henderson, Stalnaker & Taylor, 1988).

Structural constraints relating to time, money and facilities, which have generally dominated the constraints literature, have also been used as measurement items in studies of women’s leisure. Indeed, empirical studies have revealed that time and money are two of the most prevalent constraints which affect women’s leisure (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Shaw, Bonen & McCabe, 1991). However, feminist leisure research has moved beyond merely describing these constraints to uncover the hidden meanings, or ‘antecedents’, of such limiting factors (Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992; Henderson, 1991b; Henderson et al., 1989). As Henderson (1997; p. 45) points out in reference to the importance of these antecedent constraints: “the real constraint isn’t time but something else that is taking the time”.

The ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan, 1982) is one of those antecedent constraints which is not explicitly obvious in many studies of leisure constraint. Caring, nurturing and ministering to the needs of others have typically been socially constructed as women’s roles (Deem, 1986; Eichler, 1980; Gilligan, 1982). Still today, the primary care for children lies disproportionately with women (Henderson et al., 1989). Henderson and Allen (1991) suggest that women’s ethic of care can constrain their leisure, as they feel continually responsible for others’ needs and
requirements, particularly children, relatives and partners. Certain studies of
women’s leisure show that women feel they have no right to leisure, and that
when they do pursue leisure activities they feel guilty for abandoning their caring
responsibilities for children, male partners and other family members (Deem,
1986; Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992). Later work by Henderson and
Bialeschki (1991) showed that while the women they studied felt entitled to a
right to leisure, some felt impelled to qualify that right.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions by feminist leisure researchers is
the deconstruction of leisure time through examination of the supposed ‘work-
leisure’ dichotomy. As Henderson (1991b) posits, leisure for many women is not
necessarily dichotomous to work. Women’s time is often more fragmented and
more constrained than men’s. In a study of men’s and women’s perceptions of
what constitutes work and leisure, Horna (1994) found that women were more
likely to view household chores such as cooking, childcare, as work or semi-work
compared with men, who were more likely to associate these activities with
leisure or semi-leisure. Several studies have also found that women often feel
guilty for taking time out from caring for children, raising families and other
responsibilities to pursue leisure and travel activities (Deem, 1986; Harris &
Ateljevic, 2003; Henderson et al., 1989; Little, 2002). If women have a ‘double
day’ or a ‘second shift’ (meaning that they work outside of the home as well as
take chief care of domestic work at home) then viewing a lack of time only as a
structural variable becomes problematic (Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992;
Henderson et al., 1989).

One area of tourism which has revealed the uniquely constrained nature of
women’s leisure is the family holiday. Studies have shown that the sexual
division of labour does not always take a vacation. Often, women’s roles and
duties as mothers, carers and domestic workers are exaggerated during holiday
times (Bella, 1992; Davidson, 1996; Deem, 1986, 1996a,b; McCormack, 1998;
Ryan, 1997), demonstrating that the work-leisure dichotomy becomes problematic
when examined through a gendered lens. While men may feel they are having
‘time off’ from paid work and other responsibilities, women on holiday often
continue their responsibility for unpaid domestic work and for ensuring a level of harmony among the family (Bella, 1992). For example, in a study on holiday caravanning in England, Deem (1986) found that women spent just as much time, if not more, on domestic duties and ministering to the needs of others when on holiday than when at home. Nor did the holiday act as a rejuvenation period from the stresses of everyday life, with Deem’s women feeling as though they would only be able to experience a true leisure holiday if they were alone or with other women.

Davidson’s (1996) work is the exception to this debate. In her study on the holiday experiences of women with young children, Davidson found that women perceived family holidays as requiring less work and effort than the routine of everyday life. Women found time to rest and relax during the day, making self-space available by getting their partners to look after the children while they were sleeping. Work was still evident on holidays, but women perceived the level of work they had to do to differing degrees. Furthermore, women felt that their roles as a mother and partner had more time to develop and produce satisfying relationships when on holiday. Davidson concluded by saying that perhaps it is not so much the time/work issue which is of importance for women’s holiday leisure, but that of relationship building and the satisfactory nature of being with others.

Hudson’s research (Hudson, 2000; Hudson & Gilbert, 1999) on ski tourists appears to be the first to highlight the gendered nature of constraints within an explicitly tourism-based context. Hudson’s (2000) study of male and female skiers revealed a number of significant differences between men and women in terms of their perceived intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints. Skiing, still perceived as a male-dominated activity, was shown to produce more intrapersonal constraints for women than for men, particularly those related to fear, danger and injury. To encourage greater numbers of women to participate in ski tourism, it was suggested that ski resorts and practitioners needed to pay special attention to the female market, allaying women’s fears and working to build their confidence, skills and abilities.
Constraints for women travellers have also been revealed in an Australian context. A market research study on women who travel domestically in South Australia (South Australian Tourism Commission, 1996) found that women would like to travel more often than they did, but perceived constraints such as cost, time, lack of information and knowledge about where to go, lack of companions and home/work/family commitments limited their travel opportunities. Furthermore, many women noted a concern about a fear of attack or rape, particularly if travelling to remote rural areas, where they thought they might confront ‘antiquated’ attitudes towards women who travel alone.

Based on such perceptions, it is not surprising that women travellers tend to place more emphasis on their personal safety (Slavik & Shaw, 1996a; Swan & Laufer, 1998). Westwood, Pritchard and Morgan’s (2000) study of travelling businesswomen revealed that female business travellers were far more concerned about their physical safety than were male business travellers, particularly with regard to their solo status in isolated areas and after dark. Studies of female travel behaviour (see Aitchison & Reeves, 1998; Carr, 2000; Hillman, 1999; Jordan & Gibson, 2000) have also found that women tend to be disproportionately fearful for their personal safety when travelling, as well as the safety of their accommodation. A study by Blazey (1987) on senior travellers found that female participants were significantly more concerned about travelling without companions or about driving after dark, whereas men were more concerned about ties to work. For these reasons, it is also not surprising that research by Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) revealed that men tend to prefer stimulating and strange tourist environments, in comparison to females who seek more tranquil and safe surroundings.

While the research outlined in this section shows the impact of constraint on women on leisure, family holidays and women participating in certain types of group-based activities (sking, adventure tours, backpacking, business travel), very little research has dealt explicitly with constraints for women who travel alone. Exceptions include some qualitative research presented in conference papers by Gibson and her colleague Jordan on the solo travel experiences of British and North American women (see Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Jordan, 1998; Jordan &
Clearly, there is a research and theoretical gap concerning women’s solo travel and constraints that needs to be addressed. If Hudson and Gilbert (1999) referred to constraints research in tourism as a neglected dimension of inquiry, then investigation of women’s travel constraints is even more neglected.

At the same time, however, it is important not to focus solely on constraint, but to explore the power that women can gain in overcoming or negotiating their constraints. Research on negotiation has broadened our understanding of women’s constraints to leisure and travel, linking with ideas of empowerment, resistance and human agency to recognise the power that individual women have to overcome their limitations.

2.5.3 Negotiation, Resistance and Empowerment

Feminist and gender-aware researchers have been particularly interested in the concept of negotiation as it relates to women’s experience of constraint (Henderson, Bedini, Hecht & Schuler, 1995; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993b; Henderson et al., 1996; Little, 2000, 2002). While accepting that constraints do exist, these authors’ studies show that women are also negotiating their constraints and thus finding access to, and enjoying participation in, their chosen leisure activities.

Henderson and Bialeschki (1993b) were the first to extend the body of theory on negotiation to focus on women. Using in-depth interviews, the authors revealed a typology of women based on their reported negotiation techniques when faced with constraints to physical recreation. Women grouped together in four types according to their recreation participation: ‘achievers’, ‘compromisers’, ‘dabblers’ and ‘quitters/defaulters’. Furthermore, these types of women were situated on three different continua which related to their ability to negotiate, namely ‘resistance-subordination’, ‘active response-passive response’ and ‘high benefits-high costs’. In this scenario, each type of woman (eg. ‘achievers’) negotiated constraints differently to other types (eg. ‘quitters/defaulters’). For example,
achievers were more likely to negotiate their constraints by actively resisting
gendered stereotypes about the physical abilities of females, and by seeing that the
benefits of participating were worthy of negotiating any perceived constraints. At
the other end of the spectrum, the quitters/defaulters passively accepted their
constraints and felt that there was nothing they could do about them. In this latter
case, the costs of attempting to negotiate were seen as too high.

Little (1997, 2000) studied women’s constraints and negotiation techniques in the
context of outdoor adventure recreation. She found that constraints stemmed from
a range of issues, including the nature of the adventure activity, other
commitments in their lives and societal expectations. Negotiation techniques
included either ‘exit’ or ‘access’, with the latter response including strategies such
Little found that women’s definition of adventure and the strategies they used to
negotiation were not static, but rather changing throughout the women’s life
course. In a later study, Little (2002) showed how women could substitute and
use creative alternatives to access satisfying adventure experiences throughout
their lives. Clearly, there are ways in which women can overcome and transgress
their constraints.

This research into negotiation links and resonates with recent feminist focus on
women’s agency and their ability, through leisure, to resist dominant societal
structures and appropriations of expected female behaviour (Ashton-Shaeffer,
Gibson, Holt & Willming, 2001; Dionigi, 2002; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992;
Green, 1998; Henderson, 1996a; Henderson et al., 1996; Hutchison & McGill,
1992; Mitten, 1992; Little, 2002; Shaw, 200; Wearing, 1990). Under a feminist
lens, leisure has been described not just as a set of activities or experiences, but
also as “an area for women’s resistance to dominant discourses which keep them
in passive and subordinate positions in society” (Wearing, 1994; p. 9). The very
idea of negotiation, as an active act or strategy to overcome constraints, is a form
of resistance in which women become active, self-enabling participants in life
rather than victims of an oppressive, patriarchal society (Green, 1998).
The concepts of negotiation and resistance are now spilling over, albeit relatively slowly, into the gendered study of tourism and travel. Feminist and gender researchers are becoming interested in how travel, particularly solo forms of travel, can act as sites of resistance, empowerment, autonomy and identity construction for women (Gibson, 2001; Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Jordan & Gibson, 2000; Warner-Smith, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 2001). Previously in this section, it was seen that by travelling alone, women in the 18th and 19th centuries were often resisting gendered roles and norms which implied that women should stay at home. In the past, women have had to rely on negotiation strategies such as delaying marriage (or not marrying at all), adopting an eccentric persona, travelling disguised as men and writing of their accounts in a socially acceptable format (Foster & Mills, 2002). With regard to contemporary women’s travel, there are very few studies which have examined the role of negotiation and resistance in women’s ability to overcome constraints.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a review of literature relevant to women, gender and the tourist experience, acting as a research backdrop which will inform the entirety of this thesis. To begin with, the modern feminist movement and its role in raising the voices and consciousness of women was briefly explored. Research on gender and tourism was reviewed as a whole, using Henderson’s five-phrase framework as an organising structure. The solo tourist experience was then discussed in the context of mass tourism and the reasons why tourists travel alone. Following this, a detailed account of women’s role in the history of solo travel revealed that women travellers of the Victorian era were subject to a set of constraints of a unique nature. Many of these women’s challenges were tied to societal constructions regarding about ‘appropriate’ female behaviour and responsibility.

As the central theoretical framework for this study, leisure constraints theory was then discussed. It was shown that while theories on constraint have dominated the leisure studies arena for over two decades, such advances are now starting to
inform studies of tourist behaviour and the tourist experience. More relevantly, constraints theory has opened up new doors for looking at women’s experiences of leisure, suggesting that women are often more highly and uniquely constrained than men due to their roles in a gendered society (Little, 2002).

However, it was demonstrated that theorisations of constraint have changed, with notions of constraints as blanket barriers giving way to ideas of an individual’s power and ability to negotiate. Essentially, it is no longer sufficient to say that women’s constraints will automatically prevent their participation in travel. This research shift has encouraged discussions on leisure and travel for women as a site of empowerment and resistance. The concept of negotiation has provided a fruitful and timely framework from which to study women’s leisure, being that it positively emphasises women’s power and ability to actively respond in the face of constraints, rather than portraying them as passive victims.

This literature review has identified a number of advances and gaps in the research on gender, leisure and the tourist experience. It has been demonstrated that women solo travellers may face a unique set of constraints, but the questions remain as to the nature of these constraints, the source of their emergence and how they are experienced. Further, women are obviously travelling, so how are they negotiating their constraints to enable access to travel? While starting to be explored, the notions of negotiation, resistance and agency are still relatively unchartered in the discourse of women’s solo travel.

Qualitative methods have been cited as having perhaps the best potential to explore the increasing complexities of leisure and travel behaviour (Jackson, 2000; Leiper, 2003; Riley & Love, 2000; Samdahl, 1999) and particularly for understanding the lives and constraints of women (Henderson, 1991a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993b; Shaw, Bonen & McCabe, 1991; Weissinger, Henderson & Bowling, 1997). The next chapter, Chapter 3, will address these methodological issues, and describe how data were collected and analysed in an attempt to address the study’s research objectives.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Forty women were interviewed in an effort to address the research objectives as listed in Section 1.5. As noted in Chapter 1, a qualitative, inductive research framework was viewed to be most appropriate, given the exploratory, socio-psychological nature of the study. Such a paradigm encourages richness, description and complexity of data, and allowed the women to speak of their solo travel experiences and constraints in their own words and terms. Based on these assumptions, a positivist research paradigm was rejected.

This chapter describes the methodological processes associated with the present study. The first section frames the chapter through a discussion of the research paradigm which guides the study. Particular reference is made to the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances I took as the researcher of this thesis, and how these stances influence the entirety of the study. The use of qualitative research in tourism and the influence of feminist approaches are then discussed, respectively, as part of this paradigmatic overview.

Following on from this, my presence, influence and impact as the researcher and interpreter is acknowledged in a short reflexive piece. My research assumptions, worldviews and life experiences filter the way in which this study was conducted as well as the manner in which data was analysed and interpreted. Data collection methods used in this study are then outlined in the third section, and analysis techniques and coding procedures are described in the fourth. Issues of research trustworthiness and ethics are considered in the fifth section of the chapter. Finally, a summary of the methodological approach as a whole is provided, before leading into the three chapters which comprise the results component of this thesis.
3.1 Research Paradigm

The present study is located within an interpretive, qualitative research paradigm, that is informed by feminist ideologies and methods. ‘Interpretive’ here is used as a broad, umbrella term to incorporate an approach (interpretivism) which favours non-positivistic, qualitative methods, and which tends towards the analysis of the meanings of texts, events and human behaviour (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2000). Interpretivism has also been linked with research philosophies such as phenomenology (Creswell, 1998) and naturalism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The common goal of these philosophies is to seek a rich understanding of people’s life-worlds and experiences (Blumer, 1969; Guba, 1990; Kvale, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Moving beyond mere description, it is the role of the interpretive social scientist to explain and literally ‘interpret’ for the reader the multiple realities and meanings of people’s accounts of their life-worlds. As Wolcott (1994; p. 10/11) explains, the goal of interpretive research is “to reach out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis”.

The interpretive, qualitative approach is different from the positivist, quantitative stance in a number of ways. Positivism refers to a paradigm which seeks to uncover the structure of the natural and social laws which govern the world. Given this assumption, positivists generally favour scientific rigour and objectivity in their approach to research, relying upon deductive, quantitative methods (Guba, 1990; Walle, 1997). In contrast, interpretive, qualitative researchers employ inductive, exploratory frameworks to answer questions about humans and the meaning of their experience in the social world (Tribe, 2001). As a result, they favour qualitative methods which can uncover such meanings, including in-depth interviewing, life histories, biography and other narrative techniques (Guba, 1990; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 1997). It is not my aim or intention to assert whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is ‘naturally’ better for understanding tourists’ experiences. Ultimately, the nature of the research must dictate the methodological approach adopted and the methods used (Echtner & Jamal, 1997;
Seidman, 1998; Walle, 1997; Wolcott, 1994). For the current study, the research objectives sought depth of meaning and richness of data, thus a qualitative approach was warranted and deemed to be more fitting.

3.1.1 The Interpretive Paradigm: Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Considerations

The interpretive, qualitative perspective carries with it a set of ontological, epistemological and methodological positions which are fundamentally different from those espoused in the positivist paradigm (see Table 3.1). Botterill (2001; p. 199) laments what he calls the ‘unspoken epistemology’ in tourism research whereby “the assumptions that underlie social science research in tourism are seldom made explicit”. By way of acknowledging this concern, the epistemological, ontological and methodological stances I held as the researcher are clearly explicated in the following section.

Ontology refers to how one sees the world and the nature of one’s reality. Under a positivist guise, reality is singular, static, objective and apart from the inquirer. For a positivist, reality is something which exists ‘Out There’, waiting to be discovered by the objective observer and revealed as scientific ‘truth’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Jennings, 2001). In this way, it is surmised that truth can be measured and quantified. Interpretivists, by contrast, do not assume that social realities can be reduced to a numerical state (Denzin, 2002; Neuman, 1997). Viewing the social world through a more postmodern lens, interpretivists acknowledge realities, which can be observed and explained in a multiplicity of ways (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Roberts & Taylor, 2001; Tribe, 2001). In other words, there is no one correct way of interpreting social phenomena.
### Table 3.1: Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Differences: Positivist vs. Interpretive Research Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Positivist/Quantitative</th>
<th>Interpretive/Qualitative</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>- Reality is static, singular, and exist ‘out there’</td>
<td>- ‘Realities’ are complex and ever-changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(the nature of reality)</td>
<td>- Reality is objective and sits apart from the researcher</td>
<td>- Reality is subjective and influenced by the worldview of the researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Human action can be singled out, separated and studied under controlled circumstances</td>
<td>- Human action has no inherent meaning apart from the social context which defines it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Grand theories; can be generalised to all</td>
<td>- ‘Inclusive’ theorising; only applies to group being studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>- Knowledge can only be generated through scientific testing and objective observation</td>
<td>- Knowledge is a social construction, and can be generated through a variety of means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(how knowledge may be generated)</td>
<td>- Research conditions require validity through control of variables</td>
<td>- Research conditions require participants’ validation to be ‘trustworthy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Research is objective and value-free</td>
<td>- Research is subjective, allows for researcher values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Researcher sits apart from research</td>
<td>- Researcher voice allowed (reflexivity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Knowledge is absolute and inductive</td>
<td>- Knowledge is relative and deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>- Hypothesis testing; theory verification and testing; deductive</td>
<td>- Exploratory; grounded theory development; inductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(the methods used to construct knowledge)</td>
<td>- Quantitative methods</td>
<td>- Qualitative methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Quantification, confirmation and replication</td>
<td>- Understanding, description and meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From an interpretivist ontology, or way of seeing, human action on its own has little inherent meaning divorced from the social context which produces it. Interpretivists, therefore, study the social context as it is this context which determines human behaviour (Neuman, 1997). Within this ontology, it is assumed that people do not just react to external causes or forces, but are creative beings who often use guesswork and creativity in their everyday actions (Blumer,
1969). What matters in interpretive and phenomenological research, then, is how actors in a particular phenomenon make meaning of what happens to and around them (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Given these ontological stances, I believed that the best way to find out about the social worlds and experiences of solo women travellers was to interact with, talk to and listen to them in an informal and personal setting (Mason, 1996). Searching for grand or singular theories to explain the experiences and constraints of solo women travellers was not the aim. ‘Inclusive theorising’ (Henderson, 1994a; Swain, 1995), which focuses on finding multiple explanations for complex social issues, offered a more appropriate framework.

Epistemology is a term equated with the process of knowledge construction. According to Tribe (1997; p. 639), epistemological questions in tourism would revolve around:

…the character of tourism knowledge, the sources of tourism knowledge, the validity and reliability of claims of knowledge of the external world of tourism, the use of concepts, the boundaries of tourism studies, and the categorization of tourism studies as a discipline or field.

Based on such definitions, one of the key epistemological debates centres around the nature of the relationship between ‘researcher’ and ‘the researched’. Positivists would argue that true knowledge can only be discovered through objective and value-free research in which the inquirer is independent from that being researched. Mies (1993) refers to this objective distance as ‘spectator-knowledge’, whereby the inquirer watches how knowledge unfolds, unaffected by personal biases and insights. In contrast, interpretivists posit that the generation of knowledge and truth are social constructions, never divorced from the researcher’s ideologies or from the social context. Therefore, epistemologically speaking, the subjective viewpoints, opinions and feelings of the researcher, as well as the relationship between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’, are acknowledged and often disclosed through reflexive exercises where the writer uses the first-person voice as a method of narrating their experience and background (Creswell, 1998; Dupuis, 1999; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Steer, 1991; Williamson, 1996).
CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The ontological and epistemological positions held influenced my choice of methodology, as did the nature of the research objectives. The distinction between methodology and method should be delineated here (Tribe, 2001). A methodology is “a way of thinking about and studying social reality”, whereas methods are “a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; p. 3). The importance of this distinction is that the methods chosen should normally reflect one’s methodological stance (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). From a positivist perspective, structured, quantitative methods based on *a priori* assumptions are favoured, with emphasis on theory verification, quantification, confirmation and replication testing. Interpretivist researchers, by contrast, predominantly prefer qualitative methods which focus on induction and flexibility, and which seek understanding, description and meaning of how humans ‘live’ their experiences (Merriam, 1998; van Manen, 1990). Ultimately, interpretivists are interested in the way that people express themselves and articulate their responses (Mason, 1996). For these methodological reasons, in-depth interviews were seen as most appropriate for this study of solo women travellers’ experiences and constraints.

3.1.2 Qualitative Research in Tourism

Researchers interested in the behaviour and experiences of tourists have generally focussed on either tourist decision-making and destination selection (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gilbert, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mansfeld, 1992; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) or on tourist motivation (Fluker & Turner, 2000; Fodness, 1994; Mansfield, 1992; Pearce, 1993; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). While studies of tourist decision-making and motivation remain useful frameworks for understanding why tourists do what they do, they have tended to be quantitative in nature, testing *a priori* scale items, models and theories. Alternative research paradigms (qualitative; interpretive; critical) may lend more meaning and complexity to the analysis of tourism and the tourist experience (Tribe, 2001).
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While positivist approaches have generally dominated tourism research since its inception as an academic ‘field’ of inquiry (Cohen, 1988; Decrop, 1999b; Walle, 1997), many authors now support and encourage the adoption of qualitative research paradigms to study of tourism and travel (see Cohen, 1988; Dann & Phillips, 2000; Davies, 2003; Decrop, 1999b; Henderson, 1991; Hobson, 2003; Hollinshead, 1997; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Jennings, 2001; Riley & Love, 2000; Ryan, 2000; Veal, 1997; Walle, 1997). The merging of both qualitative and quantitative approaches is also now more prevalent in tourism research (McIntosh, 1998; Oppermann, 2000; Richins, 1999; Riley & Love, 2000).

No longer lingering in the ‘forbidden zone’ (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001) or acting as the ‘poor cousin’ (Hobson, 2003) to quantitative approaches, qualitative methods are now more readily used and accepted within the field of tourism studies (Decrop, 1999b). Indeed, tourism researchers are now reaching into an eclectic methodological ‘toolkit’ for answering increasingly complex tourism questions (Walle, 1997). Hollinshead (1997) offers the useful concept of the ‘bricoleur’ – a tourism researcher who draws on a wide range of methods and tools to assist understanding of tourist behaviour. Again, this is no doubt a reflection of the existence of the knowledge-based platform (Jafari, 1990), which emphasises the use of a multiplicity of methods and approaches to deal with tourism issues.

As evidence of the increasing use and acceptance of qualitative methodologies, a review of tourism literature over the past decade reveals that qualitative approaches have been utilised to study a variety of tourism phenomena, including the tourism business environment (Davies, 2003), volunteer motivation (Anderson & Shaw, 1999), vacationers’ decision making processes (Decrop, 1999a), hospitality work histories (Ladkin, 1999), skydiving (Lipscombe, 1999), destination image (Lubbe, 1998), observation of festivals and events (Seaton, 1997), senior tourists’ experiences (Ryan, 1995) and tourism planning (Sandiford & Ap, 1998). Qualitative research has also been cited as having perhaps the best potential to explore the meaning and impact of the tourist experience from the tourist’s point of view (McIntosh, 1998; Ryan, 1995; Small, 1999; Tribe, 2001).
As Wearing and Wearing (1996; p. 240) assert “in order to capture the individual tourist’s construction of his/her experience, the meanings given and the remembrance of the tourist space, qualitative methods would appear to allow for greater variety of response as well as being able to tap into the impacts on the self”.

### 3.1.3 Feminist Influences

A feminist paradigm of thought further undergirds the research methodology and methods used to understand solo women’s travel experiences. The present study takes an explicitly feminist perspective in that it documents the lives of women, strives to understand the experiences and constraints of solo women travellers from their own point of view and aims to conceptualise women’s solo travel as part of a wider social, cultural and gendered context (Reinharz, 1992).

Critical feminist theory suggests that feminist research should have an emancipatory aim to create social change and improve the lives of women (Armstead, 1995; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). While this thesis does not explicitly profess such a goal, inherent in the research is a desire to turn a critical spotlight on women and their experiences, at the same time as documenting the positive outcomes and empowerment that solo travel can enable. Several of the women commented on the advantages of having participated in the study, and by talking about their lives and travels to another person there was evidence of ‘consciousness-raising’ (Reinharz, 1992). Through the process of interviewing, many women felt inspired to think about future plans and changes they wanted to make in their lives. They also found it self-affirming to hear that other women interviewed had shared similar life events and difficulties.

In addition to changing and politicising the lives of women, feminism has also emancipated the academic research act and made it political. This has resulted in fundamental changes to how we ‘do’ research (Byrne & Lentin, 2000; Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Roberts, 1981; Stanley & Wise,
CHAPTER 3: Methodology

1983). One of the hallmarks of the feminist approach is that it aims to recast the familiar in new and fresh ways (Nielsen, 1990). As Reinharz (1992; p. 268) has noted: “feminists are creatively stretching the boundaries of what constitutes research”. In this way, feminist/gender research has been at the forefront of broadening tourism methodologies, helping to revise how we understand the nature of tourism and the tourist experience (Henderson, 1994b; Norris & Wall, 1994; Small, 1999; Wall & Norris, 2003). My goals as a researcher were very much influenced by this feminist agenda to challenge and broaden traditional approaches to social science research. This could be seen in my choices to adopt a qualitative methodology to allow women’s voices to be explicitly heard in tourism discourse, and to make the decision to write myself ‘in’ and embody myself as the researcher, or ‘producer’ of the academic ‘knowledge’ that appears in this thesis (see section 3.2).

It should be noted that there is no such thing as a feminist ‘methodology’; rather, feminist researchers rely on a series of methods, and work from a variety of paradigms (Harding, 1987; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). Feminists have employed all manner of quantitative and qualitative methods in their repertoire of research techniques, including content analysis, life histories, focus groups, structured surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews (Reinharz, 1992). However, interpretive, qualitative methods like in-depth interviewing have been particularly attractive due to the ability to focus on women’s subjective experience and because they allow for a level of connectedness and interaction between researcher and participant (Dustin, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1999; Oakley, 1981).

Perhaps one of the most profound implications of the feminist approach to research is the recognition of personal and emotional influences on the research process (Johnston, 2001). Feminists have been particularly vocal in challenging the positivistic stance which views the role of the researcher, both as a person and in relation to participants, as irrelevant (Reinharz, 1979). From a feminist perspective, this notion is turned around with the epistemological assumption that the researcher interacts and relates with the study participants. Furthermore, the
researcher as human instrument becomes embodied and his or her biases, life experiences and insights are readily acknowledged and incorporated.

3.2 Where is She? Locating the Researcher

To allow for the researcher’s voice (my voice) to be heard in the present study, and to acknowledge my personal history in terms of its relevance and influence on the research agenda, a short reflexive piece is warranted. Reflexivity is usually not accepted in the conventional, positivist paradigm, where the researcher must remain as distant and as objective as possible so as not to ‘contaminate’ the study (Mies, 1993; Reinharz, 1979). Contemporary authors of gender-aware tourism research now advocate a more personal voice in the writing of their work, in line with a feminist approach to research (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Jennings, 2001; Small, 1999). As tourism research supposedly moves towards an increasing acceptance of alternative, qualitative and mixed methodology research, the writing styles and conventions associated with conventional paradigms may not be as fitting or as relevant as they once were. While feeling reluctant to completely abandon academic conventions and write the entire thesis in the first person (this is not, after all, a study about me, but about the women I interviewed), a brief description of my history, my worldviews and my own solo travel experiences allows the reader a better understanding of my choice of research paradigm and research topic. Furthermore, including this story demonstrates the empathy I could achieve with the women I interviewed, given that we had shared aspects of the solo travel experience and some of its associated constraints and challenges.

During the years of writing this thesis, many people have asked me the question: ‘why did you choose to study women who travel alone?’ There was never a simple reply available to this, as I do not recall suddenly arriving at a point where a decision was made to undertake doctoral studies on women’s solo travel. The decision was based more on a combination of life experiences, opportunities and serendipity, which led me to a stage in life where I was interested in exploring the gendered aspects of the travel experience. Perhaps to begin to address the question, I should do what feminist author Reinharz (1992; p. 261) refers to as
“starting from one’s own experience”. In other words, I must begin with my own story, because it “…defines our research questions, leads us to sources of useful data, gains the trust of others in doing the research, and enables us to partially test our findings”.

To begin at the beginning, I was born in 1974 in Seattle, USA, and lived there until I was four years old, at which time my parents divorced. My mother, new stepfather (a Mexican-American), older sister and I relocated to Hawaii, where my parents decided to make their living from the burgeoning tourism and hospitality industry. In 1983, when I was eight, we moved again, this time from Hawaii to a new country, Australia, which has now become my home. Indeed, I come from a family of wanderers and relocaters. In the early 1960s, my maternal grandfather uprooted his wife and five children (including my mother) from the very comfortable suburban life they were living; he bought a Volkswagen kombi van and moved them all to a remote village in Baja California, Mexico. They lived there for a year, in a shack they made themselves, with no power, water or schooling. This adventure was part of my grandfather’s dream of teaching his children how to live a more ‘simple’ life, where they could live without the modern, material comforts they so took for granted. Never satisfied with conventional life, my grandparents went on to live in Haiti, Indonesian Borneo and North Queensland, Australia. Stories of these times and trips have been told to me since as long as I can remember, filtering the way I viewed the world and influencing the way I have made my life choices.

I spent much of my childhood and teens travelling by myself from Australia to visit my father and other relatives in the USA and Mexico. I feel very fortunate, because I believe these experiences imbued me with a sense of independence, confidence and an ability to appreciate cultures and ways of life different to my own. Because of these experiences, I see the benefits of travel for the individual, and I have a particular interest in the empowerment and autonomy that solo travel can bring for women. It is these experiences and interests which led me to choose tourism as my university major, and to study gender issues and travel for my doctorate.
My own solo travel experiences are relatively limited, compared with many of the women I interviewed for this study. I have travelled alone in Bali and for a few days in Europe, but the experiences I had in those places as a solo female tourist enabled a level of empathy when listening to the women’s stories of constraint. Such experiences, in addition to having an academic background in tourism, allowed me to identify and reciprocate as they told of the joys and benefits of going solo. During my own limited time as a solo traveller, I have felt the fear of others concerning my trips, felt the nervousness of arriving in an unfamiliar place, felt uncomfortable eating on my own, felt a heightened awareness of the attention my female form attracts, experienced unwanted harassment and wished for companionship at times when lonely. I also have experienced the sense of achievement, adventure and autonomy that comes from travelling alone, making my own successful decisions, meeting an array of interesting people and being free to do and see whatever I wanted, whenever I so desired.

It would have been nearly impossible for me to try to understand and interpret what these forty women were saying and meaning without having some firsthand knowledge of the constraints that they faced. This solo travel ‘knowledge’ removed some of the distance between us as relative strangers who, in most cases, had not met prior to the interview. Many women naturally expected me to speak about my own experiences of life and of travel within the interview experience. I felt that if I was to ask these women to talk about themselves and their personal lives, and to take the time to do so out of their very busy lives, then it was only fitting to reciprocate with my own stories and experiences. Like a normal conversation between two people, in which personal details and opinions are often not divulged until trust is established, many of the women opened up in interviews, after knowing that I also had shared similar experiences. In this way, common ground was established, and I was seen as more of an insider of equal stance rather than as a distant authority or outsider. This can be seen in the words of one woman during her interview, who noted:
‘I’ve probably never ever talked to anyone in this much detail, because I’m a great believer in never talking about something to someone unless they can share somewhat in that experience, because it gets very boring for them. …’ But the fact that you have been to different places means you’ve actually experienced it – you’ve been alone’ (J, 43).

During the years of writing this thesis, I took a number of small solo trips related to both work and pleasure. While travelling, I always brought with me the voices and words of the women I had interviewed. Their experiences were with me at all times as I negotiated my own constraints as a solo woman traveller. Returning from these trips, I was able to consider and re-assess what the women had said in interviews, and this lent a fresh insight into analysis of the data.

During the years of writing, I also became more understanding of what women at a variety of stages of the life course endure and enjoy. As a young woman commencing my doctoral studies at the age of 25, it took time and thought to find the capacity to fully grasp (if one ever can) the meanings and implications of what the women were telling me. This was particularly the case for those women with whom I had not shared key life experiences, such as being married, having children, getting divorced and aging. For these reasons, the analysis of data needed to be continually considered and re-visited, but this analysis was assisted as I matured in both years and life experience. Indeed, certain challenging life events of my own during the course of this doctoral candidature have also contributed to an ability to empathise and understand.

I have also found that listening to these forty women’s stories of constraint and negotiation have enabled me to find ways to negotiate my own personal and professional challenges. By putting these stories into perspective through consideration of the gendered and feminist literature, I have been able to achieve a greater understanding of the challenges women confront on an everyday basis in all aspects of society. Listening to the women’s stories and trying to understand

* * … These ellipses, when used as part of the women’s italicised quotes, refer to words or sentences that were removed for the purposes of improving grammatical flow and for quickly achieving the relevance of the women’s words to the point at hand. Clearly, not all aspects of every participant’s experience could be included in this thesis, thus certain parts of their stories were excluded at my discretion.

# This identifier (J, 43), refers to the woman’s first initial, plus her age at time of interview.
them through the gendered and feminist literature has irrevocably altered my life and way of looking at the world. From this point onwards, my outlook on the world and society will always include a consideration of gender. This gendered lens now colours how I see myself in relation to others, how I act and write professionally and how I deal with my own personal relationships.

My own personal and professional growth during the five year period of writing this thesis has been immense. While studying other women’s journeys, I found that I myself had also embarked on a solo journey of sorts – a journey of self-discovery which saw me question my views about the world, how I related to people and what I thought was important in the pursuit of academic knowledge. I say it was a solo journey because I often felt alone as a qualitative, gender-based researcher in a discipline where objectivity, generalisation and distance seemed to be the norm. I understood the tenets of scientific objectivity and quantitative research, as this was the paradigm which influenced my undergraduate studies. I understood, and was told on several occasions, that the gates to academia were held by quantitative researchers, and that a qualitative PhD was held in a less serious regard. This discourse of the inappropriateness of qualitative research was consistently heard over the course of my studies, contributing to a sense of isolation.

It has also been frightening at times to speak openly about my gendered views and opinions to others. I have felt the fear of becoming too associated with ‘women’s research’ or ‘feminist methodologies’, because of the negative implications and curious reactions this seemed to effect. According to Deem (1999; p. 163), exploring issues of gender in research often seems too contentious and is therefore avoided in favour of ‘easier’, more socially and academically-accepted topics:

Some researchers may simply not wish to examine how gender might be relevant to their areas of interest because they do not wish to problematize their own gender identities or delve into their role in gender power relations. Furthermore, there may be an anxiety about venturing into the gender and leisure ghetto for fear of becoming trapped there, which could affect career prospects and funding opportunities.
Over the years of writing, however, I noticed a growing body of tourism research which utilised qualitative and gendered approaches. This lessened, to some degree, my sense of isolation and self-doubt, as did an increasing level of confidence and an increasing sense of wanting to tell these forty women’s stories. And, like the women I interviewed, I found ways to negotiate so that I could continue. Joining up with other like-minded, ‘gender aware’ people who understood the research paradigm in which I was working proved to be particularly rewarding and encouraging. At every level, the research process has been a fascinating, empowering and humbling journey.

3.2.1 Methodological Assumptions

This section has thus far outlined the key paradigmatic thrusts which underpin the present study, including interpretivism, qualitative research and feminism. At this stage, and continuing on from points raised in Chapter 2, a number of methodological assumptions which ground my research approach may be summarised:

♦ Gender is essentially a social construction (although biological differences exist and are recognised). Gender and power relations undergird all aspects of tourism development, production and consumption.

♦ Complete objectivity is not achievable, as I can never entirely be divorced from the research. My own life experiences, worldviews and opinions colour the research process, the methodological choices made, the research outcomes and the way the research is presented and described. For these reasons, it is important to allow my voice as the researcher ‘in’ to the writing of the study. At the same time, however, it is also important to ‘stand back’ from the data from time to time to ensure clarity of the participants’ meanings.
Women (and all research participants) should be allowed to explain their experiences in their own terms and using their own language, and their words should be used as the basis of data analysis and coding.

A single theory to describe the tourist experience is not appropriate, thus multiple explanations and theoretical interpretations are more relevant.

3.3 Data Collection

This section outlines the data collection strategies used for this study of women’s solo travel constraints. Sampling issues are discussed first, followed by a demographic description of the forty women who participated. The primary data collection technique of in-depth interviewing is then outlined, including details of questions developed, pilot testing and interview protocol. As well as in-depth interviews, a number of further data collection techniques were used to provide additional information and these will also be explained. Finally, the section concludes with a consideration of the relationship between myself and the study participants, and the impact of this relationship on the methodology as a whole.

3.3.1 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviewing was an appealing data collection method, as it is a fluid, flexible and sometimes “wonderfully unpredictable” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; p. 5) technique that allows for a personal and emotional level of connectedness not encouraged in conventional approaches. As the study aim was to explore and understand the meaning of women’s experiences of solo travel, interviews were selected as the best method for accessing women’s voices, thoughts and feelings (Glesne, 1999; Henderson, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). There was a desire to go beyond surface descriptions and explore the deeper meanings of how women experience their life-worlds, thus in-depth interviews were seen as the most appropriate method (Henderson, 1991; Kvale, 1983). Dunn (2000; p. 80)
contends that transcribed interviews are unlike other forms of data in that they “remind [us] that there are real people behind the data”.

In-depth interviewing, as its name suggests, refers to a prolonged conversation between two people with a specific research purpose (Berg, 2001; Henderson, 1991; Minichiello et al., 1990; Roberts & Taylor, 2001). The purpose in the present study was to generate data regarding how women are constrained in their solo travels, by asking the women themselves to describe their experiences. In-depth interviewing can take several forms, ranging from ‘unstructured’ to ‘structured’ (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Henderson, 1991a; Minichiello et al., 1990). Completely unstructured interviewing relies on fluid conversation between two people, without the aid of set questions. A general concept is brought to the interview, but the nature of the interview is entirely guided by the interviewee and what he or she wants to emphasise. In structured interviewing, the interviewer develops and provides a list of ordered questions that do not change from respondent to respondent. Structured interviews and surveys are often not as popular with interpretivist and feminist researchers as they do not encourage the development of emotional and personable dimensions. By using completely structured interviews, there is little allowance for improvisation or flexibility on the part of the interviewer or for using one’s own judgment and intuition. Situated between the unstructured and the structured interview is the ‘semi-structured’, or ‘focussed’, interview style (Kvale, 1983; Rubin & Rubin, 1995)

### 3.3.1.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

A semi-structured style was adopted for this study, as it left more freedom for the researcher to change questions as the conversation unfolded. In this way, the interview content was altered and modified depending on the situation as well as the individual participant and her responsiveness to the questions at hand (Richardson, Dohrenwend & Klein, 1965).
A semi-structured interview guide was developed to direct the research conversation (see Appendix A). Rather than coming to the interview tabula rasa, I wanted to explore certain questions raised in previous research on women’s leisure, travel and constraint. These ‘set’ questions helped to bring a degree of structure to the conversation and acknowledged my previous experience as a solo female traveller. The identification of these questions was influenced broadly by literature on gendered leisure, women’s experience of constraint and the tourist experience generally.

Broad areas of questioning focused on women’s life histories and background; travel history and experience; travel preparation techniques; travel motivations and life desires; constraints and challenges related to gender; negotiation strategies; travel information sources utilised; the experience of coming home; satisfaction with travel experiences and benefits/outcomes of solo travel. Not all of these question themes will be analysed and reported in this study, but they helped to provide a more detailed picture of who each woman was and how she viewed and experienced her solo travels.

A general flow of questioning was designed, based on Henderson’s (1991a) notion that sensitive interviewing should start with broad questions first, leading into more complex, personal and sensitive issues. The natural progression of how most people encounter the travel experience (i.e., leave home, arrive, travel, return home) was also used as this provided a logical structure to the order of questioning. Although broad topic areas were covered with all of the women due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, questioning was left open and flexible in an effort to let the women’s narratives flow at their own pace and to allow for their own interpretation of the questions (Riessman, 2002).

### 3.3.2 Sampling

Forty women were interviewed over a twenty month period from October 2000 to July 2001. To access these women, no single sampling method was utilised. Rather, the researcher relied upon a combination of non-random techniques,
including ‘purposive’ and ‘snowball’ sampling. Both of these techniques are concomitant with, and acceptable within, an interpretive, emergent approach to research and theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Purposive sampling is a popular and useful method in interpretive, exploratory approaches to research (Miles & Huberman, 1984). As its name suggests, purposive sampling refers to a process in which the researcher seeks people who will meet the purposes of the research aims under inquiry, and who can offer specific and purposeful knowledge about a particular social phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 1997). In this way, women who could share stories about their experiences as solo travellers were purposefully sought. To delimit the sample and keep in line with the research questions, however, prospective adult female participants needed to satisfy three broad criteria:

1) You are Australian, or currently living in Australia;
2) You have travelled solo at some stage of your adult life, and that this travel was not specifically for business; and
3) You have visited at least one overseas country during your solo travels.

Initially, prospective women for the study were identified through my own contacts and acquaintances, with further participants identified through these initial contacts. This process is referred to as snowball sampling, which “begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases” (Neuman, 1997; p. 207). After a number of interviews, however, the researcher became concerned that most of the women tended to be socio-economically similar, in that they were largely Anglo-Saxon, well-educated, single and had no children. The age range was relatively concentrated, with very few women under 30 or over 50 years of age.

To broaden the sample and to search for women with a wider range of travel experiences and life backgrounds, further participants were accessed with the
assistance of the media. Firstly, a media release was prepared through Griffith University (see Appendix B), detailing the study’s aims and emerging results. One local Queensland newspaper picked up the story (see Appendix C), as did a commuter magazine in another State, a website news page and two Queensland radio stations. A small advertisement was also placed on *Journeywoman* (see Appendix D). This monthly web-based newsletter is aimed chiefly at women travellers and has an estimated readership of 500,000 people from around the world, including Australia (www.journeywoman.com).

The response to these media efforts was encouraging of the interest in the topic, generating over 100 email and phone responses from women keen to participate in the study. As the research was constrained by temporal and financial resources, as well as the depth of data generation and analysis required by the interpretive approach, I again purposefully sampled from this pool of women according to the three criteria outlined above, in addition to the likelihood that they could be easily accessed and interviewed in person.

For all women who were selected for the study, a ‘Background Information’ letter (see Appendix E) was mailed to them prior to interviewing. The aim of this letter was to confirm their interest in being interviewed and to explain the nature and aims of the study. Broad areas of questioning were also highlighted, as several women were keen to know what they would be asked about in the interview. This assured them of their capacity to answer and allowed them time to reflect on their solo travels in preparation for the interview. Attached to this background letter was a ‘Confidentiality Agreement’ form, (see Appendix F), which women were asked to sign and bring to the interview. This form had the purpose of reassuring participants that anonymity would be protected to the best of my ability, and that their quotes and stories included in the published thesis would not carry any other identifying features besides a first name initial and an age at the time of interview (eg. J, 55). It was also stipulated that the women were under no pressure to divulge any information which made them feel uncomfortable, and that tape recorders could be turned off at any time during the interview. When signed, the confidentiality form demonstrated the women’s voluntary consent to be
interviewed and participate in the study, and confirmed their satisfaction with having their quotes included in the thesis or in other academic publications (journals, conference proceedings etc.).

3.3.3 Interview Setting and Procedures

About one week after a background letter was mailed out, a follow-up telephone call was made to confirm a date, time and place for the interview, if interest was still evident. Exactly half of the interviews (twenty) took place in the women’s homes or current places of residence. The home setting was preferable for both researcher and participant. The women obviously felt comfortable in their own surroundings, and could draw on travel mementos such as photo albums, letters and diaries to supplement their oral stories. For the researcher, these ‘natural settings’ provided an everyday context in which the women’s stories could be situated.

Interviews took place at a range of times to incorporate women’s busy lives, from 9 in the morning to interviews at 9 pm. These face-to-face interviews usually took place free from disruptions of work commitments, family, partners or children. Most women had set aside time and a quiet space well in advance. These quiet spaces enabled clear, uninterrupted conversation, and provided for ease of transcription. Those women who had the primary care of their young children found it difficult to find such unfettered self-space and time, but in these cases the interview usually proceeded around the child’s interruptions. It is important to note, however, that these distractions could frustrate the women and at times make them lose their train of thought. Outside of their homes, other interview settings were arranged at participants’ request, usually for reasons of convenience or because they wanted to get out of the house. Seven interviews took place at cafés/restaurants/hotel lobbies, four at my University campus, one at a participant’s workplace, one at my home and one at a beachside park.

All interviews were tape-recorded with permission by the participants. Again, assurances of confidentiality were given, and the women were reminded that the
tape could be turned off at any time. Interviews lasted anywhere from one to three hours, and in many instances, informal and general conversation with the women carried on long after interviews were finished. Lengthy trips were at times made to reach the women’s homes, and overnight stays were required in two cases. Extended interactions such as these helped to establish a sense of intimacy, trust and sharing between interviewer and interviewee.

Before the ‘formal’ tape-recording of the interview began, time was spent in informal conversation with the women, talking about mutual interests, life backgrounds and solo travel experiences. Many of the women were also curious about the other women who were being interviewed: did they share similar experiences, or were they different? Were there really other solo women travellers out there like her? What had they said? These questions were answered to the best of my ability, in an effort to make the conversation a reciprocal and sharing one, while at the same time maintaining other participants’ anonymity and confidentiality. These informal conversations, often shared over a hot drink or something to eat, served as an ice-breaker between two people who were most times virtual strangers. A few women honestly expressed their nervousness at being interviewed, but most relaxed with my attempts to establish a friendly, unthreatening and relaxed interview atmosphere. For those who were initially uncomfortable with the interviewing process, formally turning on the tape recorder could seem somewhat intrusive, so efforts were made to do this very casually (Henderson, 1991), but still under the permission of the participant.

Each interview was approached with the view that women were unique individuals requiring different styles of questioning and relating. Remaining sensitive to these differences, I needed to continually reassess the relevance and structure of questions in the interview guide. Mason (1996) refers to this process as ‘tailor-making on the spot’. I also found that I was often unconsciously mirroring the language style and terminology of each woman to establish a better level of trust and communication, while remaining true to my own communication style. Matching speech patterns, body language, speed and attitude are rules of
any normal conversation and are particularly encouraged in qualitative interviewing (Minichiello et al., 1990).

Once interviews were complete, the women were thanked and informed that they may be contacted again in the near future to participate further in the study. As soon as we parted, I completed a prepared pro-forma ‘Post-Interview Notes’ sheet (see Appendix G). This form enabled me to write reflective notes immediately following each interview. Detailed observations were made about the location and setting of the interview, the participant’s reaction to questions and their interest level in the study, general perceptions about the participant, similarities and differences with previous interviews and other general comments. These notes ensured that the ‘un-said’ details surrounding the interview interaction were recorded. Often, many personal insights were gained through conversations once the tape had been switched off. Writing notes helped to capture these informal conversations, adding further insight to the interview and what each woman had said. These notes were also useful for data analysis and writing stages, as they helped to recreate the mood and feeling of having been there with the women in the interview setting.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after they took place. These transcriptions allowed women’s oral stories to be transformed into written form in preparation for data analysis and coding. While the interviews provided a rich and detailed account of the women’s lives and solo travel experiences and constraints, further information was sourced through a number of additional data collection methods.

### 3.3.4 Additional Data Collection Methods

Within about four weeks following the interview, each participant was sent a follow-up letter (see Appendix H). This letter had the dual purpose of thanking the women for their interest, enthusiasm and participation and reminding them of
the request for further involvement in the study. The request for further involvement was three-pronged, including:

1) A request for women to fill out a short survey;
2) A request to ask women if they could draw up a ‘travel timeline’ to outline the exact details of all of their solo trips, and
3) A request asking the women if they could write a little more about solo travel and what it meant for them in their lives.

The purpose of the survey, timeline and additional writings was to build upon the interview data and to help construct a more accurate, detailed account of women’s travel experiences.

The women’s transcriptions were returned to them in the envelope with this follow-up letter. Some women had indicated that they were keen to keep transcripts of the interview as written memories of their travel experiences. The women were asked to read through their interview transcript and advise if they had any comments, changes or additional feedback to offer. Of the forty participants, only two sent back copies of the transcription with additional comments. Based on this response, it was tentatively assumed that those who had not sent back any changes or comments were satisfied with the way their interview had been transcribed on paper. Further contact and exchanges with some of these women verified that they were satisfied with the transcript, but that they had been too busy to make comments.

### 3.3.4.1 Survey

The key aim of the follow-up survey (see Appendix I) was to gather additional demographic and travel information that may have been overlooked during the interview. Survey questions were both open-ended and close-ended, and focused on three main areas: demographic information, women’s lives/backgrounds and the solo travel experience. Close-ended demographic questions sought
information about the women’s age, relationship status, number of children, level of education and current occupation. Women were also asked open-ended questions about their current interests in life and what they considered to be their major life achievements.

Further solo travel information was gleaned through close-ended survey questions about whether the women spoke a second language, whether they preferred short or long trips, how they viewed themselves as travellers and reasons for travelling solo. Many women had ventured to numerous places on a number of different trips. Rather than burden the interview, which was a limited window of opportunity to talk with the women, with detailed itineraries of ‘where and when’, there was a focus on in-depth reflections.

3.3.4.2 Travel Timelines

Women were also asked to draw up a ‘timeline’, or travel ‘resume’, to outline major life events or milestones (birth, study and career achievements, marriages/relationships, birth of children etc.) and details of major solo trips (dates, destinations visited, length of trip). The idea of a ‘travel timeline’ was to gain accurate details of all trips taken and destinations visited. It also had the aim of helping to put the women’s travels in the context of key life events and circumstances.

3.3.4.3 Additional Writings

The purpose of asking for additional writings was to allow women to express on paper and in their own words what solo travel was like for them. It was also an opportunity for women to reflect on the interview and provide any further detail. Participants were asked to reflect specifically around four additional areas regarding their solo travel philosophies and experiences:
1) What has travel, and solo travel in particular, meant for you in your life? (What words or images come to mind to best describe your travel experiences?)

2) What needs are met for you through travel?

3) What would you say are the greatest benefits and challenges of independent travel?

4) What are your future dreams and aspirations with regard to travel and life?

A reply-paid envelope was included as a means of encouraging response to these three additional requests. Women were encouraged to attend to these requests in their own time, at their convenience and at their own length. A total of twenty women (or half of the sample) replied to the follow-up requests, and their response came in a variety of ways. Of these twenty women, nine women completed all requests; that is, they completed the survey, drew up a travel timeline and provided additional writings in response to the additional questions asked. Six women returned the survey only, and the remaining five women attempted the survey and timeline, but did not include any additional writings.

While a somewhat limited response, it is perhaps not surprising given what other feminist authors have found. Sustained and collaborative contact with participants is a central facet of feminist methodology, yet several researchers have found that the women they are studying are often reluctant to participate in any prolonged manner (Armstead, 1995; Reay, 1995; Reinharz, 1992). This is due to a variety of reasons, including lack of time, lack of sustained interest and a general reluctance on the part of women to participate any further. The limited success of this post-interview data collection stage may also have been due in part to the researcher’s reluctance to bother the women any further, knowing the time it would take out of their busy lives to address the tasks. I shared Merrick’s (1999) concern about to what extent I was ‘using’ women and to what degree the research would be of use and of relevance to them as participants. The additional information supplied, however, did provide useful and relevant data which added further insight to the rich data women had already supplied in their interviews.
3.3.5 Participant Demographics

The forty women interviewed represented a range of ages, socio-economic statuses and education levels (see Appendix J). A wide range of ages was accessed, with women interviewed being from nineteen to eighty-five years of age. One woman was under twenty, five were in the 20–29 range, eight were between 30–39, fourteen were between 40-49, seven were between 50-59, four between 60–69 and one woman solo traveller was 85 at the time of interview. No women in the 70–79 age range were evident as there were no responses from this age group to interview requests. Attempts were made to locate women of this age, but were not successful.

The majority of women were born and raised in Australia, although four were born in New Zealand, two in North America, one in Africa, one in New Guinea and one in Western Europe. No Asian, Aboriginal or Islander women were represented in the sample, despite searches for women of these ethnic backgrounds, although two women were of Greek and Italian descent. This pattern of response has been noted in other empirical studies of Australian women in leisure (Little, 1997) where, despite attempts, most women choosing to respond to the study were white, educated women who had the propensity and the resources to participate in leisure and travel.

The majority of the forty women interviewed for the present study were living in the States of New South Wales or Queensland at the time of interview. This pattern of location resulted from local media efforts, and enabled easier access to face-to-face interviews. However, three women who responded favourably to being interviewed lived in South Australia and three in Victoria, so telephone interviews were arranged for these cases as the researcher was unable to reach these destinations due to constraints of time and finance.

Predominantly, the women interviewed were single (twenty-seven women) and without children (twenty-seven women). This result correlates with statistics presented previously in Chapter 1, which show that women are increasingly
deciding to remain single and not have children (ABS, 2002a; Richards, 1994). Eight of the women had partners but were not married, and an additional six were married. Of the forty women, eleven women were either divorced or separated. One woman was a widow. Heterosexual relationships were dominant, but homosexual partnerships were also evident and mentioned. Thirteen of the women had children, mostly of teen or adult age. Two women still had the primary care of young children at home; one of these women was single and the other a married homemaker, or, as she termed it, a ‘private children manager’ (J, 43).

The demographic table shown in Appendix J also reveals a relatively highly educated sample. Almost two-thirds of the women (twenty-eight of them) were tertiary educated or were currently studying at tertiary institutions such as universities and TAFE colleges. Four of these twenty-eight women had completed, or were currently studying for, postgraduate degrees. Of the remaining twelve women who did not have any tertiary education, six had completed senior levels of high school while four held partial or junior levels of high school education. Two women did not identify their education status.

It was difficult to neatly describe the women as either ‘employed’ or ‘unemployed’. The delineations of full-time/part-time and employed/unemployed did not seem to sit easily with these women. Several women who did not hold down structured, paid full-time or part-time jobs were creative in finding other means of long- or short-term employment and self-education. For example, one woman (J, 43) who would statistically be considered unemployed, was a busy university student, mother of two young children, wife, dedicated bush regenerator and school volunteer. Again, while some women technically worked part-time as consultants, their day-to-day lives were full as they strove to build their own businesses or carry out other roles in the community.

For standardised demographic purposes, however, it was found through interviews and surveys that fourteen women could be classified as full-time employees, working in a wide range of fields including environmental education, graphic
design, marketing, teaching, journalism, psychology, administration, banking and finance, nursing, medical science and funeral direction. Ten women classified themselves as self-employed, which meant running their own businesses or consultancies. Four women held part-time or casual positions in a variety of fields including pharmacy, newspaper design, office management and language teaching. Four women were tertiary students at the time of interview, and considered this their full-time employment. Two women were technically unemployed and identified that they were struggling financially. Five participants identified themselves as retired, but all of these women were busy with multiple roles as mothers, wives, volunteers, teachers, consultants, community workers, writers, domestic carers, and travellers.

As a group, the women who participated in this study were widely travelled and had ventured to every accessible continent, apart from Antarctica and the Arctic. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the variety of countries visited by the solo women travellers. The division of regions in Table 3.2 is based loosely on contemporary world atlas delineations (‘Mini Political Atlas of the World’, 2000) and thus may not be geographically precise. What it provides, however, is a broad indication of where the women had travelled in their journeys.

As shown in Table 3.2, the three most popular regions for solo women travellers in this study were South-East Asia (twenty-six women), Western Europe (twenty-five) and the United Kingdom (twenty-four). Countries in Eastern Europe (sixteen), North America (fourteen) and the Indian sub-continent (thirteen) were also prevalent. Locations in Western Africa rated the lowest visitation scores.

This pattern of visitation is fairly typical of Australians’ overseas travel. Bureau of Tourism Research statistics show that the main destinations visited by Australians, in order of rank, are New Zealand, USA/Canada, UK/Europe and then South East Asia (BTR, 2001). One notable difference between this study’s findings and the BTR data is that South-East Asia was the most widely visited destination for the women interviewed. It is not possible to speculate with any certainty the reasons for this result, but it is no doubt a reflection of the nature of
the sample – a group of independent, solo travellers. Based loosely on what many of the solo women travellers said in their interviews, they desired more ‘adventurous’ destinations, feeling that South-East Asian countries would offer cultures and experiences different from their own. At another level, South-East Asia was also viewed as a low-budget destination, where they could travel for an extended period of time on a limited amount of money.

Table 3.2: World Regions Visited by Study Participants During their Solo Travels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Visited Solo (outside of Australia)</th>
<th>Number of Women*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe (inc. Scandinavia)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe (inc. Balkans &amp; Eastern Bloc; Turkey; Greece)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America (not inc. Mexico)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East Asia (inc. South Korea, Japan, China, Tibet &amp; Hong Kong)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Africa (inc. Morocco, Algeria, Egypt)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East (inc. Syria, Jordan, Israel, Iran, UAE, Oman)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa (inc. Zimbabwe, South Africa, Seychelles, Madagascar)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea &amp; Melanesia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central &amp; East Africa (inc. Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America &amp; Caribbean Islands</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe (Spain; Portugal)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the numbers in this column do not equal 40 as most women had travelled to more than one region

3.4 Data Analysis

A common criticism of qualitative research is that data analysis procedures are seldom made explicit by researchers or they remain mysteriously unclear, resulting in readers wondering how the analyst arrived at his or her conclusions (Attride-Sterling, 2001; Neuman, 1997). Some qualitative authors have addressed
CHAPTER 3: Methodology

this concern by outlining detailed step-by-step instructions for how to ‘do’ qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The approach adopted for data analysis and coding in the present study is that procedures of data analysis are made clear, but are not seen as rigid rules which must always be followed. That said, these procedures are outlined in enough explicit detail here so that the reader may judge the adequacy of the results and whether or not the results make sense (Creswell, 1998; Marshall, 1990; Merriam, 1998). In this way, argues Marshall (1990; p. 193), “data collection and analysis procedures are public, not magical”.

3.4.1 A Grounded Approach to Data Analysis and Theory Development

For this interpretive, qualitative study, a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) provided an interactive framework for data collection, data analysis and theory development. At its simplest level, grounded theory is so named because theory unfolds from, and is literally grounded in, the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is primarily an inductive approach which searches for underlying themes or patterns of meaning within a particular social phenomenon (Connell & Lowe, 1997; Riley, 1996). In this way, any hypotheses or conclusions stemming from the research are always connected to the data and thus there is always a running dialogue between data and theory (Dey, 1999). Ultimately, results elicited in a grounded fashion should make sense to the people involved in the social phenomenon being studied, as results and themes are derived directly from their words (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theory generation and insight occurs in a ‘building block’ fashion, where theoretical concepts are emergent, unfolding bit by bit through constant analysis and re-analysis of data. Grounded theoretical approaches usually set out to discover new insights and use small samples and qualitative methods of induction (Connell & Lowe, 1997).

Employing a grounded approach, the interview data was analysed and coded as soon as it was transcribed. As new data was collected through subsequent interviews, it was constantly compared to gauge its fit with existing categories and conceptualisations. Based on these building conceptualisations, still more data
was collected and compared to previous data. This technique, referred to as ‘constant comparison’, is a key feature of grounded theoretical development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using this method, the data coding procedure became more of a creative “rummaging process” (McCracken, 1988; p. 19) of searching for meaning and points of commonality, rather than a scripted process with a defined end.

Grounded data analysis is rarely a one-off, isolated activity. Rather, I was simultaneously and continually collecting data, analysing data, reviewing literature and tentatively developing theories and constructs to represent the data. Therefore, I entered data analysis at several stages over the life of this study. Each time I came to analysing the women’s interviews, new insights were brought in through reviewing new literature, re-rev iewing previously read literature, or from conducting new interviews with women. Fresh ways of looking at the data were encouraged and stale conceptualisations were discounted.

3.4.2 Data Coding Procedures

Analysis in interpretive, qualitative research involves a “winnowing” of data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; p. 43) into themes and categories which form the building blocks of theory building and conceptualisation. Coding is the stage where crude forms of data (in this case the mass of words and phrases that comprised the interviews) start to take form and meaning through a dual process of reduction and conceptualisation. Coding is an important part of data analysis as it begins to provide a link between data and theory (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

In grounded, inductive approaches to analysis, data are generally coded at two levels: ‘open’ and ‘axial’ (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Neuman, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The open coding stage of data analysis assisted the researcher in ‘unpacking’ the data, through a process of breaking the data down into discrete parts, or categories. These categories then became the building blocks for developing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this initial stage of open coding, the computer program NUD*IST was utilised. Using
UD*IST, data was coded by chunks of text (key paragraphs, sentences and groups of words from the women’s interviews) into broad, ‘higher order’ categories. Some chunks of text were placed into more than one category as they represented more than one idea or were relevant to more than one category. The initial, higher order categories which emerged from the data tended to correlate with main areas of questioning, such as life history, travel information, motivations, constraints, negotiation strategies and outcomes, and were labelled accordingly (see Appendix K).

Sub-categories were also identified to further define these higher order categories, and to provide a more detailed and meaningful account of what the women were saying. The names of these sub-categories were generated in both an ‘in vivo’ fashion (that is, based on the women’s words) and by using categorisations identified in the literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These borrowed categorisations from the literature acted as “sensitising concepts” (Scott, 1991; p. 148), providing a general sense of guidance and reference when analysing the interviews.

While the use of NUD*IST was beneficial in this initial open-coding stage, the program was not utilised any further. The researcher felt more comfortable examining, coding and comparing instances of data with pen and paper, and in context with the rest of the interview. Using NUD*IST, the computer prepared data seemed to promote inflexibility, becoming increasingly disassociated from the rest of the interview, and from what the women were really saying. It has been argued that computer assisted programs like NUD*IST do not lend rigour to a qualitative study, as some authors discuss (Weitzman, 2000; Weitzman & Miles, 1995). They merely assist data management by providing a tool for analysing large amounts of qualitative data. For these reasons, the next level of axial coding was completed without the assistance of NUD*IST.

In axial coding, the researcher engages with the data at another level, in which categories and sub-categories start to be conceived of in terms of how they link and relate to one another. Here, the researcher moves beyond listings of
categories and sub-categories to explore more meaningful inter-relationships among the categories. Attride-Sterling (2001) refers to this as ‘thematic networking’. At this stage, sub-categories of constraint were considered in terms of how they might relate to one another, and how constraint might also link to negotiation and motivation.

According to Dey (1999) data analysis can come to a closure when categorisations no longer produce significant conceptual variations, and when additional data no longer adds new insights. In the grounded theory literature, this point of foreclosure is termed ‘theoretical saturation’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Some have tried to assess the number at which that occurs. Douglas (1985) suggested that he reached an obvious saturation point at about twenty-five interviews. Rather than the number of cases, however, better indications of ‘enough’ are left to the aware researcher who knows his or her data better than anyone and who has been embedded in that data for often months or years. Thus, each research project will find its own point of saturation at different levels (Seidman, 1998). Sufficiency and saturation appear to be good working criteria for ‘how much’ rather than numbers which dictate ‘how many’. In the present study, no new categories and conceptualisations were evident after about first twenty or so interviews. At this stage, the women were showing a tendency to relate similar views and trends. To broaden the sample and to deliberately search for difference, a concerted effort was made to source additional women who had travelled to different countries, were of different stages of the life cycle, of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds or who held different socio-economic positions. This ensured that a variety of cases were found, and that categorisations and theoretical conceptualisations which had already been developed could be reassessed to allow for these additions. At forty interviews, it appeared that a sufficient breadth and depth of the data had been captured, and that continued interviewing would not allow for any substantially new conceptualisations to occur.
3.5 Research ‘Trustworthiness’ and Ethical Considerations

All social science researchers, whether working within a positivist or interpretive paradigm, aim to produce valid, authentic and trustworthy knowledge of human experience, gained through ethical means (Merriam, 1998). Both paradigms are concerned with the issue of whether the research results produced are credible, believable and accurate (Creswell, 1998). Yet the paradigmatic differences in establishing research credibility have been a key issue of debate within the interpretive social science literature (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Wolcott, 1994). The canons of what constitutes ‘good research’ from a positivistic, scientific perspective do not necessarily apply, nor are they necessarily relevant, when working in an interpretive paradigm. In conventional, positivistic research, rigour is judged on the basis of objectivity, validity, reliability and generalisability (Neuman, 1997). In the interpretive, qualitative paradigm, elements of these criteria can be adopted, but their underlying meaning may be entirely different. As such, qualitative researchers rely on a range of different techniques and differing terminologies for determining research credibility and quality, or ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It should be noted that the techniques described in this section are not offered as ‘quick fix’ prescriptions, sometimes tagged onto qualitative research to lend it (supposedly) further academic rigour. Barbour (2001) refers to this phenomenon as “the tail wagging the dog”, and pronounces it quite common in qualitative studies that seem overly concerned with justifying their methods to a positivist audience. According to Barbour, methods used to establish research trustworthiness should only be conducted if they benefit the project and improve the quality and depth of the data, not because of a mislaid quest for positivistic rigour. For this study, additional data collection methods were not used to lend the in-depth interview data credibility and rigour, but to add further depth and dimension to what the women had already said.
According to Merriam (1998; p. 204-205), there are a number of techniques the qualitative researcher can weave into the methodological framework to improve the trustworthiness of findings. Such techniques include:

- **Triangulation**: multiple investigators, multiple data sources or multiple methods;
- **Member checks**: data and interpretations of data are taken back to a select number of participants for verification;
- **Peer examination**: colleagues and critical friends are asked to comment on researcher interpretation of findings, and
- **Acknowledging researcher bias**: the inquirer’s worldview, ontological and epistemological positions and assumptions are made clear at the outset of the study.

While interviews were the primary method of data collection, the surveys, travel timelines and additional writings allowed for a degree of triangulation, supplementing the original data and providing different viewpoints on the same issue. Similar interpretations, categories and findings emerged from these sources to support the analysis of interviews.

According to some authors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995), member checking is perhaps the most important method for establishing research credibility and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985; p. 296) claim that research is only credible when “the reconstructions that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities”. In the present study, member checking was achieved by sending women their interview transcripts and asking for comment and verification of accuracy.

Another member checking method used was a two-hour ‘group feedback workshop’, which women were invited to attend in December, 2002, (see Appendix L). Towards the final stages of data analysis, I became increasingly concerned that I was leaping to spurious conclusions which did not resonate with the women. This is a concern common to feminist and critical researchers, who
wish to ensure that their results are recognisable to the people who provided them (Cotterill, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990). Holding this workshop helped to alleviate these problematic issues. The group feedback workshop also had the aim of allowing women to feel as though they were collaborating in the research, and ensuring that they could meet some of the other women involved in the study, as they had previously indicated a desire to do.

While all interviewees were invited to attend the workshop, only eight women responded. This was somewhat disappointing, but was probably due to the time of year it was held (December, with Christmas looming amongst other busy commitments), and that women who lived too far away from the workshop venue (my University campus in South East Queensland) may have found it difficult to get there. On reflection, the response might have been improved by holding similar feedback workshops in other areas of Australia like Sydney, where a number of interviewees resided. All in all, the small size of the workshop proved to work in its favour, as it allowed for a more intimate and inclusive discussion where every woman could make an equal input based on my facilitation.

The eight women who could attend came together and met me at a room at my University campus, where they were presented with a brief overview of the research findings and categorisations. An open discussion then followed in which the women were asked to describe whether these results accurately ‘fit’ their own experiences of solo travel. Comments noted during the workshop showed that they clearly understood the categories and themes identified through data analysis, and that the findings resonated with them and adequately described their own experience. This process revealed that while individual women’s experiences were collected through interviews, a commonality of shared experience was also clearly evident. Several of the women exchanged contact details with one another, and planned to meet up at a later date to discuss common travel interests.

Protecting the women’s anonymity was also considered for the group feedback workshop, where women were asked to sign another confidentiality agreement form (see Appendix M). Again, this form had the dual role of informing the
women of the practices to ensure their anonymity within the study, as well as to ask their permission to use quotes from the workshop for publication in the thesis or other academic publications.

In addition to member checks, comments from colleagues, peers and critical friends were deliberately sought and provided valuable critical insight for the researcher to ensure that spurious conclusions about the data were avoided. After initial, open coding stages, five academic colleagues were given an excerpt of one woman’s interview transcript, as well as the list of dominant themes and categories I had developed to that point in time (See Appendix K). These five colleagues were then asked to use these themes to code the interview transcript. While in most cases there was a clear match between my coding and my colleagues’, there were some discrepancies, which provided insights and further questioning about how the data was being interpreted.

Merriam (1998) also speaks of the importance of researchers acknowledging their biases and ontological positions at the outset of the research. My worldviews and ontological, epistemological and methodological positions as the researcher were explicated in an earlier section of this chapter. This was done in an effort to assist the reader in understanding how the researcher both approached and interpreted the data. Clarifying these ‘biases’ lends weight to internal validity in that it demonstrates how the women’s realities have been constructed and influenced by the views of the inquirer. While an awareness of my own perceptions is acknowledged throughout, efforts were also made to delimit my impact and influence where it may have detracted from the women’s meanings and experiences. A modicum of objectivity, if this is at all possible or even necessary, was sought through continually standing back from the data and reassessing it, and by presenting results back to the women themselves, to critical friends and acquaintances and to academic colleagues. In these ways, I strove to ensure that what was written in the final thesis was not just my account of women’s solo travel experiences, but their accounts, filtered through my informed observations and conceptualisations as the interpreter.
3.5.1 Ethical Issues

While making efforts to ensure the research was academically trustworthy and meaningful to the participants, the impact of the research on the women also needed to be considered (Merriam, 1998). Henderson (1991a; p. 72) notes that the challenge of interviewing within the naturalistic paradigm is to “unlock the internal perspective of every interviewee”. Sometimes, however, this ‘unlocking’ can have unanticipated effects on the participant, and thus needs to be dealt with sensitively and ethically. Even though the women were generally speaking about positive aspects of their solo travel experiences, personal and painful memories and events could not be avoided and these issues needed to be dealt with in an ethical and sensitive manner. One woman, for instance, was particularly concerned about not being associated with certain details of a trip about which her current partner was unaware, and which she felt might hurt him emotionally. In all cases, every attempt was made not to identify women throughout the research process.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants was also a key ethical concern. As indicated previously in this chapter, all women who participated in interviews were required to sign a confidentiality form, demonstrating their consent to participate and their agreement allowing the inclusion of direct quotes in the thesis or in future academic publications. If these forms were forgotten by participants, spares were kept on hand and these were read and signed by the participant prior to the interview.

During interviews, the usual ethical norms and conventions of a conversation between two people were obeyed, with the researcher trying to show her respect and curiosity for the women’s lives, while at the same time making efforts not to be overtly intrusive. As a person naturally comfortable with the role of listener rather than speaker, I felt at ease with the interview technique and with letting the women guide their stories. The need for intensive and attentive listening skills were crucial and the researcher was present, mindful and sensitive to what was being said at all times (Henderson, 1991a; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).
3.5.2 Establishing Trust and Rapport with Study Participants

Many qualitative and feminist researchers seek a level of connectedness and equality between inquirer and the subject of study (Dustin, 1992), aiming to reduce unequal and exploitative power hierarchies which usually favour the inquirer. In feminist approaches to interviewing, the issue of ‘rapport’ is widely discussed. Loosely defined, rapport refers to the sincere, intimate, empathetic and trusting relationship which is meant to be achieved by the interviewer with each of his or her interviewees. I adopted a ‘knowledgeable stranger’ position that sits somewhere between ‘interviewer as friend’ and ‘interviewer as stranger’ (Reinharz, 1992).

From an ethical standpoint, obtaining the women’s trust was crucial for the success of the research. Without the women feeling a sense of ease and reciprocity when with the researcher, then interviewing would have been a difficult and artificial process. The approach for interviewing the women solo travellers adhered to the feminist tenet of “believing and being trusted by” the interviewee (Reinharz, 1992; p. 27). To encourage this trust, reciprocity was particularly important. As explained previously in this chapter, if I expected that women speak of their lives, then it seemed ethically appropriate that I reciprocate and share their experiences (McCormack, 1993). As noted earlier, many women often requested verification of their own experience, with questions to the effect of ‘haven’t you experienced that?’ or ‘what did you do in that situation?’. Support was sometimes requested from the women about current life problems, relationships and careers, and I did my best to give neutral advice, as I would do for any friend or colleague. This met with Cotterill’s (1992; p. 594) belief that when interviewing women “the interviewer should invest her own personal identity in the research relationship by answering respondents’ questions, sharing knowledge and experience, and giving support when asked”.

All of the women interviewed led busy and full lives, and the time they took to participate in the study was greatly appreciated. Women participated for a variety of other reasons also: to talk with someone, to contribute to the pursuit of higher
knowledge, to speak of their love for travel, to recall travel memories and to talk about issues they could not talk about with anyone else. With regard to the latter motive, one woman noted her relief in finally being able to talk to someone about the impact of solo travel on her life:

‘Travelling has always been such a personal thing for me. I’ve not often talked to my friends [here at home] about what a major impact it had had on my life and my way of thinking’ (K, 31).

Another woman completed the survey in an effort to continue her current life philosophy of ‘being true to others’ (J, 43).

Comments from the women also demonstrated that participating in interviews can be a positive, rewarding and therapeutic process (Berg, 2001; Kvale, 1983; Letherby & Zdrodowski, 1995). This was definitely the case with regard to the current study, as written comments acquired through follow-up data collection methods demonstrate:

‘I really enjoyed answering these questions – it gave me some interesting perspective on where my life is at now!’ (A, 25).

‘Looks like all this travel talk did the trick as I leave in Feb/March for 3 months in Brazil’ (J, 31).

‘It has been a wonderful opportunity for me to share all this with you. Many thanks!’ (A, 58).

‘I enjoyed the opportunity to discuss my experiences. ... Your encouragement to write some more about my travel experiences has come at the perfect time as I have recently started writing, mainly articles and short stories. I had a bit of beginner’s luck – my first article is about to be published! ... I actually feel my most adventurous experiences are still ahead of me and I can’t wait! Good luck with your study’ (S, 32).

‘This has given me an opportunity to think about this pull to do some solitary travel. My life is in a very slow process of change and sometimes it seems as though it is just marking time. Some time away on my own would give me time for internal reflection – a retreat’ (A, 52).
3.6 Methodological Limitations and ‘Reflections’

There are a number of methodological limitations and ‘reflections’ associated with this study which need to be addressed. Firstly, while the relatively small sample was justified in that depth, richness and meaning were sought, it will be difficult to generalise these forty women’s experiences to a broader population of women travellers. Furthermore, as this was a study of Australian women travellers, it will also be problematic to assume that solo women travellers of other cultural origins would face similar constraints or experience there travels in the same way. Thus, generalisability is relatively limited with this sample. However, for this study, generalisability was not the aim, as the goal was to study a small and particular group of solo women travellers, not solo women travellers at large. From the vantage point of conventional positivism, generalisability is concerned with the ability to relate and transfer the findings back to the population at large (Alasuutari, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In qualitative research, however, small sample sizes are not seen as a ‘limitation’ because breadth and depth of meaning are sought. As Merriam (1998; p. 208) notes:

In qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many (emphasis in original).

Instead of the word generalisability, Strauss and Corbin (1998) prefer the term ‘explanatory power’. Explanatory power refers to the ability of findings to “speak specifically for the populations from which [the findings were] derived and to apply back to them” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; p. 267). By deliberately and continually searching for ‘outliers’, or for women who could provide alternative viewpoints on what had already been said, the explanatory power of the results has been strengthened. Merriam (1998) suggests another alternative for positivistic generalisability, and that is ‘user’ or ‘reader’ generalisability. User generalisability involves “leaving the extent to which a study’s findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations” (p. 211); that is, the readers...
and the users of the study. According to Alasuutari (1995; p. 145), “if all readers of a study can recognize a phenomenon from the description presented, then generalizability is not a problem”. To enhance the reader/user’s ability to decide how generalisable the results are to their own lives and situations, Merriam (1998) suggests using a writing style which emphasises ‘rich, thick description’. Using a rich style of writing, readers are provided with enough description so that they can determine themselves how closely the results match the categorisations given by the researcher.

In this study, results chapters consist almost entirely of quotes and excerpts from the women’s interviews, sufficient so as to validate in the reader’s mind the strength of each category and sub-category. Using such a rich, thick style of description also assisted with establishing the ‘reliability’ of the study’s findings. In traditional, quantitative research, reliability refers to whether research findings can be replicated in a future study. However, this notion is problematic in the interpretive paradigm as it does not recognise the dynamic nature and changing contexts of human life. What is true of this current group of women may not be the same if interviewed again in five, ten or fifty years’ time, and nor should we expect it to be. Rather than reliability as it is connoted in the conventional sense, the ideas of ‘dependability’ or ‘consistency of results’ may be more appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That is, qualitative researchers should not strive for or concern themselves with whether the same findings would be found again, but for whether the results make sense to the actors involved in the social phenomenon under inquiry, and to what degree these results are consistent with the data collected. Again, taking the results back to the women for verification and applicability strengthened the reliability of the findings.

A second limitation associated with this study’s methodology may be that the women were relying on their memories of solo travel in their interviews, not on actual in-situ accounts of travel. Due to reasons of time and finance, I did not interview women as they were travelling solo in different destinations, therefore the ‘naturalism’ of the data is limited (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). However, as the goal was to consider the influence of the women’s travel constraints as part of their everyday lives, interviewing them at home provided an
important source of detail about their living situations, work commitments, family responsibilities, relationships and financial resources. Interviewing the women after they had travelled also meant that a more reflective and studied account could be given, as they had had time to consider the impact and benefits of travel on their lives. According to Henderson (1991a), qualitative interviewing often relies on a retrospective process whereby people are recounting or remembering their experiences. This is due to the fact that for varying reasons, researchers often cannot ‘be there’ in the natural setting (Blumer, 1969; Henderson, 1991a).

It is difficult to determine the level of impact on this research of not interviewing women as they physically travelled solo. One of the main ways it might have affected the interview process was that often, women could not recall exact details about exact travel events, places and times. This was countered, however, by information supplied in their post-interview surveys. As an overall approach to dealing with women’s retrospective travel accounts, I chose to adopt Oakley’s (1981) idea of ‘believing the interviewee’. I may not have agreed everything the women said or directly shared aspects of their experiences, but I still started out each interview with the premise that the women’s stories were accurate and real descriptions of their solo travel. I felt I had an obligation to form sincere and committed relationships with the women I interviewed, therefore it was not deemed appropriate to assume that women were fabricating stories or only telling me what they wanted me to hear. Whatever they did choose to tell me was regarded as their ‘truth’.

A third limitation concerns the social, cultural and racial diversity of the women interviewed. As shown by the participants’ demographic profile, the sample overall tended to be single, without children, Anglo-Saxon and well educated. Efforts were made to seek ‘outliers’ which could provide disconfirming evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1984), but perhaps these efforts could have been strengthened to encourage a more diverse sample of racial, cultural language and socio-demographic profiles.

This was a study which sought to explore women’s constraints to travel, but also how they negotiated those challenges. Thus another limitation involves the fact
that this study focusses only on women who do travel solo, and who have the relative privilege and opportunity to travel. As such, the sample does not include women who have never been able to travel, nor did the study explore the reasons or constraints leading to why women might not be able to access travel. Furthermore, this study has specifically examined the experiences and constraints of women who travel voluntarily and for pleasure. There are thousands of women who must involuntarily ‘travel’ and migrate because of political unrest in their own countries, and who would suffer an array of constraints and challenges quite different from these female pleasure travellers (Scutt, 1993). Thus, these may prove fruitful areas of future inquiry into women, travel and constraint.

Finally, qualitative methodologies are sometimes accused of being limited in that they only report what the inquirer thought they heard, read or saw (Merriam, 1998). Though I directly identified with many of the women and could empathise with their stories, attempts were made throughout the writing of this thesis not to romanticize or embellish their accounts of solo travel. As Reinharz (1992; p. 232) states: “identification is useful, not ‘sacred’”. While I was indeed impressed by these women’s strength of will and positive outlook on life even under extreme circumstances, I tried to produce a balanced and even account where possible. At the same time, I have not hidden from the reader my identification with the women, nor the emotions which clearly were raised as a result of the research process. Furthermore, I have explicitly acknowledged that my worldviews and gendered opinions have influenced the research process, the way that the thesis was structured written and even what was written. Strauss and Corbin (1998; p. 18) claim that we can never be entirely unbiased or objective in the research stories we tell, as we are all (even if unwittingly) trying to prove some sort of claim or justify a point of view:

The descriptive details chosen by a storyteller usually are consciously or unconsciously selective, based on what he or she saw or heard or thought to be important. Although description often is meant to convey believability and to portray images, it also is designed to persuade, convince, express, or arouse passions. Descriptive words can carry overt or covert moral judgments.
3.7 Summary

Decrop (1999b; p. 157) has argued that “interpretivist researchers … often fail to explain and justify how and why their qualitative approaches are sound”. The information provided in this chapter has attempted to avoid this accusation, through a detailed account of the methodological approach adopted and methods used. Firstly, the interpretive, qualitative and feminist research paradigm which guides and informs this study of solo women travellers was discussed. As a solo woman traveller with my own personal story and history, my location in the research process was confirmed, not hidden. This demonstrated to the reader the impact and influence my life experiences and solo travels have had on the research process. I also outlined the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions which are the cornerstones of my research worldview. The positivist paradigm was questioned in terms of its ability to elicit in-depth understanding of the tourist experience, and an interpretive, qualitative framework was deemed more useful for answering the research questions at hand.

In this methodological discussion, it was identified that qualitative, in-depth interviewing was chosen as this method allowed for women’s voices and stories to be expressed in their own words and terms. The in-depth interviewing procedure was outlined, as were data coding and analysis methods which reduced the large body of qualitative data into meaningful and organised units of analysis. Issues of research trustworthiness, validity, reliability and ethics were also explored, in an effort to ensure that the study’s findings were credible and believable, and that ultimately, they made sense to the women who were interviewed. Study limitations were then outlined, and possible solutions and justifications for these limitations provided.

Having outlined the methodological and data collection processes, the following three chapters provide the results section of the thesis. Chapter 4 outlines the women’s constraints associated with solo travel, while Chapter 5 reveals the coping mechanisms and strategies used to negotiate their constraints. Chapter 6 provides a synthesis of the constraints and negotiation results, offering a descriptive model of the constraints-negotiation process. The results chapters generally focus on presenting the women’s words only, and findings are linked back to the literature in the discussion offered in Chapter 7.
“Fear stops all of us from moving on, from growing, from gazing beyond the mere reflection in the mirror. We all dare to dream, but few of us dare to act. We spend our lives hesitating in the wings, not dancing on the stage of life.”

Sorrel Wilby

(‘Tibet: A Woman’s Lone Trek Across a Mysterious Land’, 1988; p. 218)

“I’ve always wanted to be like a male explorer in the early days, to be able to set off into the wild unknown, which women didn’t tend to do that we know of”

(‘M’: 49 year old woman interviewed in this study).

The historical discussion provided in Chapter 2 revealed that women travelling throughout the 18th and 19th centuries were constrained in their journeys by a number of factors, including confining gendered expectations, others’ negative attitudes and societal ridicule. While changes in era and social status have opened up doors of opportunity to contemporary women not previously accessible by their historical counterparts, constraints on their leisure and tourism activities still appear to be evident, as was outlined previously in the literature review. For Australian solo traveller and author Sorrel Wilby, whose quote opened this first results chapter, the restrictions appear to emerge from her own personal fears and self-doubts. But what is it that leads to this fear which reduces a woman’s ability to ‘dare to act’?

For the forty women who participated in this study, a dominant feature of their stories was the range of constraints and inhibitors that impacted on their lives and solo travel experiences. The first section of this chapter gives a broad overview of the four key constraints categories which were identified through grounded analysis, as well as the sub-categories which further define these categories. The
following four sections describe in much more detail the nature of each of the identified constraints categories. Throughout all of these sections, key narratives and quotes from the women’s stories are presented, providing the reader with a rich and vivid account of how constraints were experienced. The sixth section highlights some of the women’s stories that were ‘dissimilar’ to (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), or that appeared to qualify, the dominant theme of constraint. In the final section, a summary of the key constraining factors on the women’s solo travel experiences is provided.

4.1 Constraints Impacting on Women’s Solo Travel

An inductive, grounded approach to analysis of the women’s words and stories revealed four broad, but inter-linking, themes of constraint, namely socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial:

1) **Socio-cultural:** This category incorporates those constraints that stem from the social and cultural contexts within which women live and encounter their solo travel. Such socio-cultural constraints relate to the influence of social expectations, the women’s roles and responsibilities, others’ perceptions towards their travel and unwanted attention during the travel experience.

2) **Personal:** Closely linked to the socio-cultural framework, this category of constraint revolves around those personal and private limitations related to the women’s self-perceptions, beliefs and emotions. Examples reflective of this category include self-doubt, fear, vulnerability and loneliness.

3) **Practical:** This type of constraint incorporates the practical hardships and challenges that confront women who travel alone, such as a lack of time and money, a lack of local knowledge at the destination and the stress and fatigue of going solo.
4) **Spatial:** Spatial constraints are those which limit and restrict women’s freedoms and movements within tourist destinations, spaces and places. Within this category lay issues such as limitations in destination choice and restricted movement in tourist settings.

While these four categories have been developed according to an inductive, grounded process of data analysis, similarities to previous themes of leisure constraint are obvious. Indeed, the titles of these overarching categories of constraint have been influenced by this existing literature. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) themselves have commented in their role as grounded researchers, no one can come to his or her research completely devoid of prior influences, life experiences and concepts developed from reading the literature. This point was previously highlighted in Chapter 3 (section 3.4.2), in the discussion on categorisations from literature being ‘borrowed’ as ‘sensitising concepts’ (Scott, 1991). For example, the socio-cultural category aligns with Crawford and Godbey’s (1987) ‘interpersonal’ or societal constraints, while the personal category identified from the analysis of the women’s stories is akin to Crawford and Godbey’s ‘personal’ constraints. Furthermore, the practical constraints that the women spoke of are somewhat similar in nature to Crawford and Godbey’s (1987) ‘structural’ constraints. This is drawing a fairly superficial similarity to previous models of constraints theory, however, and the complexities and differences inherent in these women’s data will be brought out later in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis.

The four categories outlined in this chapter provide a broad typology of women’s solo travel constraints, yet it was also found that the women experienced constraints within each of these categories in different ways depending on their stage of travel. Constraints were evident that impacted on the women’s ability to access solo travel. These pre-travel, or **precedent**, constraints included any factor that affected the women before they departed for travel, set in the context of their everyday lives.
Once the women had departed, however, and were travelling solo, a new set of constraints was activated. These during-travel, or in-situ, constraints impacted by reducing or limiting aspects of the travel experience itself. In essence, precedent and in-situ constraints reflected similar patterns of socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial impact, but were experienced differently depending on the stage of travel in which the women were located.

At another level, the broad nature of these four constraint categories meant that a substantial amount of qualitative data was coded within each category, often more than seemed manageable. The development of sub-categories encouraged a more ‘fine-grained’ analysis (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; p. 191), whereby the properties of each category helped to more clearly define the complex nature of the women’s stories. Table 4.1 offers a summary of the four constraints categories, their sub-categories, and how these constraints manifested at both the precedent and in-situ stages of the solo travel experience.

Table 4.1:  ‘Precedent’ and ‘In-Situ’ Constraints Impacting on Women’s Solo Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>PRECEDENT CONSTRAINTS (Pre-Travel)</th>
<th>IN-SITU CONSTRAINTS (During-Travel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Cultural</td>
<td>Social expectations</td>
<td>Host attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Unwanted attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others’ perceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Doubts and fears</td>
<td>Fear and vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loneliness and isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Lack of money and time</td>
<td>Lack of local knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Travelling with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress and fatigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td>Limited destination choice</td>
<td>Restricted movement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conspicuousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Socio-Cultural

The socio-cultural context, both at home and abroad, effected a dominant constraining influence on the women’s lives and solo travel choices, opportunities and experiences. At the pre-travel, precedent stage, women spoke of the constraining influence of social expectations regarding the appropriateness of their solo travel. Tied to this theme of social expectation were women’s roles and responsibilities. Due to their multitudinous roles as mother, partner, carer or wife, women also found their capacity to access solo travel significantly reduced. Inter-related, yet still a separate category, was the women’s difficulties surrounding others’ perceptions, as family members, work colleagues and friends expressed disapproving attitudes towards their decisions to travel solo.

At an in-situ level, socio-cultural constraints were also evident, but manifested in new ways when carried over into the physical experience of solo travel. For example, the socio-cultural mores of the destination restricted aspects of the women’s behaviours, actions and freedoms as women experienced negative host attitudes towards their status as a solo female traveller. A more concrete manifestation of this disapproval was the unwanted attention, usually from local men, that women reported during their solo journeys.

4.2.1 Socio-Cultural (Precedent)

4.2.1.1 Social Expectations

Social expectation was reported as a common constraining factor, particularly for women who were raised in Australia between the 1940s and 1960s. These women spoke of feeling constrained in these social eras, because of societal expectations concerning what was ‘appropriate’ female decorum and behaviour. Indeed, several of the women raised during these decades commented on the rarity of women travelling alone, and the missed travel opportunities because of negative social response to women going abroad by themselves. As one woman succinctly
noted: ‘Travel wasn’t [the norm] for women in my age group when we were younger’ (A, 58).

Two women in their early sixties discussed how higher education and careers of choice were not priorities for young Australian girls growing up in the 1950s and ‘60s. One woman spoke of leaving school after junior studies because it was the standard expectation of young people in this era: ‘At 15 years old, leaving school was the norm of most people at this time, around 1952. Jobs and money were the major concern’ (P, 64). As a result, this same woman was steered towards what she regarded as menial employment: ‘I became a typist and switchboard operator – not very stimulating, but this is what women did back then’.

Another woman of a similar age spoke of feeling restricted by her sisters’ expectations of an appropriate career. This woman’s desire to teach physical education was limited by her family’s idea that being a librarian was more socially acceptable: ‘I wanted to be a sports teacher, and my sisters, who were all teachers, virtually talked me out of it … At that time I was very gullible and I went along with them. So I became a librarian’ (C, 62).

For yet another woman, reflecting on her early adulthood in the late 1960s, choices and educational opportunities were limited by gendered expectations of women’s responsibilities to home and family. These issues were further compounded by her family’s socio-economic status. As she explained:

‘I came from a family of five girls. We were raised poor, basically, poor working class ... I married when I was 18. ... There was a really ambiguous message there, like, you have to be careful around men but men will provide for you and take care of you. So there was a big push towards me getting married and there was no emphasis on education at all. So we all got married very young, my sisters and myself, and had babies very young, and we all married working men again ... and up until I was 28 I was still on the land’ (M2, 49).

One woman discussed how her desire to become a funeral director was thwarted because of a societal perception that it was an industry ‘for men’: ‘Something I had always wanted to do was funeral directing. ... It came about when I was ten
years of age and my girlfriend at school, her father was the Anglican minister. ... I used to see the funeral directors coming to have funerals in her father’s church and I remember thinking back then, “oh, I’d love to do that”, but I knew you had to be a man ... so I kind of dismissed it until many years later when I decided, “I don’t think you have to be a man any more”’ (S, 45).

Another woman was confronted by similar expectations of appropriate ‘female’ employment, as her dreams for becoming a chef succumbed to something more socially acceptable: ‘I actually wanted to be a chef, but in those days they wouldn’t take women as apprentices, because you had to have a four year apprenticeship. You could have babies and you might have one in the four years, so they didn’t take any risks. ... I love cooking, and that’s why I wanted to become a chef, however I became a cooking teacher instead’ (D, 49).

This sense of needing to comply with social expectation was not just limited to older women, however. One younger participant saw that solo travel was something she had to do in the near future, before ‘settling down’ and becoming constrained by a stable relationship: ‘I think there’s still that itch to travel on my own, and I don’t know when I’m going to satisfy that itch, but I would probably like to plan it soon, before I choose to become too complicated or too involved in a relationship’ (R, 30).

**4.2.1.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

Linked closely with social expectation and the impact of social era, many women spoke of how requirements to care for children or family, maintain their marriage or relationship and fulfil career aspirations reduced their capacity to depart for solo travel. As mothers, partners, carers, students or employees, the women found their solo travel preferences and choices limited because of feeling tied to others’ needs.
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

It should be noted, however, that not all women consciously perceived or reported these roles and responsibilities as constraints. Being a mother or a wife were considered to be roles which brought some of life’s greatest joys and achievements. As one woman clearly stated: ‘The children are my life. I adore them’ (D, 57). Outside of taped discussions, however, a few women admitted regret at having been married early and having mothered children. For these women, being a wife or mother did hamper their dreams and travel plans.

Typically, however, a woman’s responsibilities and commitments at different stages of her life influenced and limited her solo travel opportunities. Roles and responsibilities associated with marriage, children, and caring for others meant that some women’s personal desires were put aside for ‘later’:

‘I think women in my age group and older would agree with me here that for so many years you function for other people – someone’s wife, someone’s mother. … I have to confess that I do wonder why on earth I didn’t do this [travel] sooner … when you’re very young, you think there’s plenty of time to do those things, and then suddenly you get married and have children’ (A, 58).

‘Between the ages of 18 and 20 I found a fellow who became my husband. Travel at this time was seldom heard of. Always remembered the dream of ‘going overseas’ and would have put this into realisation had I been able to find a companion, remembering this was not done in the ‘50s. So, the inevitable – married in 1958 and worked two to three jobs to own the Great Australian Dream’ (P, 64).

Some women did not take to travel until their commitments to significant others were complete, which often resulted in first travel experiences not occurring until the women were aged in their 40s, 50s and 60s:

‘I thought it’s better to wait and let them [her children] have their schooling and everything. … So I virtually didn’t start [travelling] until … well, I would have been probably 45, something like that when I started’ (P, 64).

* an underlined word in the women’s quotes demonstrates the women’s natural emphasis when speaking

Euphemism referring to one’s desire to own a home or block of land.
‘I was married very young, nearing on 20. And that didn’t work out and my husband left me with three small children, ten years later, so I raised and educated my three girls on my own. ... And I always promised myself that when I’d finished educating them, I’d go and do my own thing. .... But I was totally committed to giving – I reckoned that I had nothing that I could give my children except a really good education and a lot of love. ... When they finished high school, when the last one finished high school, was the first time I took off’ (D, 57).

Such experiences were not rare, with other women expressing similar sentiments reflective of their ethic of care:

‘When I left university I was going to ... travel overseas, but I married and had a family and so that put paid to my travelling for a long time. So, it’s been in the back of my mind – I’ve always wanted to travel overseas. Well, actually, I hadn’t travelled overseas until I was about 42’ (J, 55).

‘I knew that I wanted to go, but in the meantime I had had a family so things were put on hold. ... There’s times when I have thought maybe I should have [stayed home] because I should be a responsible parent’ (A, 45).

For several women, travel was not something that could be accessed or justified for some time, because of husbands or partners who did not share or support their travel dreams:

‘My ex-husband was not a person who ever wanted to travel. He was a very, very hard worker and he’d created a really prosperous business which I’d helped him build and he wasn’t giving me anything back. He would take everything from me but wouldn't give anything back for me’ (T, 63).

‘After the challenge of raising my children I just felt really bored, you know. ... I just wanted to go and I wanted to get a bus and “let’s travel”. And my husband would insist that I was mad ... he wasn't interested in anything except making money and building respectability and security and to me, none of those things mattered’ (M2, 49).

‘One of the reasons we actually got divorced was I wanted to travel ... I actually wanted to live somewhere overseas and wanted to do that with him, and he wanted that as well, but the time never came. He was always too committed with [his work], and we actually never really got away enough. ... I always felt guilty, like I was holding him back’ (J, 38).
Commitment and responsibility to others and family were particularly important for women from Mediterranean and European backgrounds. As one woman found, the role of being a ‘good’ Greek daughter did not include travelling solo abroad:

‘My parents were Greek migrants, so my upbringing was very, very strict. ... I mean, I wasn’t allowed to go out unless I went out with a cousin, and that didn’t change until I was 20. ... So there were different cultural things that I found so restricting. ... This family friend who was Greek turned around and said, “oh, Greek girls don’t go overseas by themselves for a year”, like, “it’s not something you do” and “what kind of daughter is she?” and all this kind of stuff ... and there was quite a few different Greek families that were saying things like, “how could you let her do it?”’ (M, 31).

4.2.1.3 Others’ Perceptions

While the women’s assigned roles and responsibilities served to limit aspects of their access to solo travel, so too did the perceptions and opinions of others. Several women noted feeling restricted by family members’, partners’, and work colleagues’ views that a woman travelling alone was socially inappropriate. Linked with social expectation and role constraints, many women discussed how, in their daily lives, others’ perceptions about the appropriateness of women travelling solo exerted pressures on them that affected their ability to achieve desired goals.

When the women in this study told others about their plans or dreams for overseas travel, they met reactions including disapproval, surprise, fear, and anger. Attitudes and comments from friends, work colleagues, and family members, while not necessarily stopping the women from travel, pervaded women’s internal beliefs and construed a lack of support which could negatively affect their travel aspirations.

For example, several women experienced others’ fear as they constructed solo female travel as an activity involving high levels of risk, vulnerability and danger: ‘Most people, they ask “gee, it’s a bit risky doing it, isn’t it?” ’ (D, 49). Or, as
another pointed out: ‘Oh yes, people said, “how could you do that? How could you go on your own?” … People do have this inner fear about solo women travellers’ (P, 64). A younger woman traveller found that people were concerned about her vulnerability as a solo female: ‘People think girls are more vulnerable when they travel alone, I suppose, and that they’re not physically as strong as a man’ (S, 20).

One woman, a member of a local over-50s travel club, discovered that certain members of this group felt it was ‘unfeminine’ for her to venture abroad alone: ‘Somebody said I’ve got too much testosterone. And one old guy said, “oh you’re an adventuress, aren’t you?”’. Anytime I want to do anything a little bit different, they say, “oh, you adventuress”. … Like some of the women in the club, they look at you as though you’re insane or something. … “ooh, you do take risks” ’ (A, mid 50s).

In other cases, family members were found to be nervous, concerned or generally not supportive about the women’s solo travel plans:

‘It was just too ‘other’ for them [her family] for me to go to another country in my twenties … my brother said things like, “I can’t understand why you’d want to do it. … I know my family were very nervous. Mum was virtually sort of praying the whole time I was away, apparently’ (J, 43).

‘My Mum was a little bit worried, my boyfriend’s Mum was worried … everyone was a bit worried to think I was going off by myself and my friends were saying, “oh, I’d never do that”’ (W, 23).

‘When I first went overseas, I was 20 – they [her parents] were like “no, you’re not going to go” and when I was over there they’re just “come back, get back into Australia now” … they hated it. They thought it was awful. … They were just being a bit protective and I just don’t think they thought that I could cope with packing up and going to a completely foreign country, you know - their littlest, youngest daughter’ (A, 30).
Cultural backgrounds could confound the social inappropriateness expressed by others. For the women of Greek and Italian descent, solo travel plans were regarded with scepticism and distrust by their relatives:

‘All the rellies* were saying, “oh, you shouldn’t be going off, you shouldn’t be going”. Like, coming from an Italian family, “shouldn’t be doing this”. … That was the reaction back in 1968’ (A, mid 50s).

‘Even one of my uncles said to me, “why do you want to go overseas for so long? Three or four weeks is enough for you to see all of Europe”. … So it was kind of something that other people couldn’t get their minds around’ (M, 31).

Friends and work associates also expressed their disapproval. As one woman succinctly pointed out: ‘My friends thought I was crazy’ (W, 23). Another found that talking about solo travel plans raised concerns from others about her safety and protection: ‘I found before I went that friends would try to put their fear on me, saying, “why are you doing it? is this wise? ooh, be careful”’ (A, 52).

A woman planning to travel alone to South-East Asia in her early thirties did not find much support from friends: ‘Before I headed out I felt I had all these ideas about wanting to go travelling - my own friends here were not very supportive nor understood where I was coming from. … A lot of people are quite horrified that I love to travel on my own, that I really enjoy that, and they can’t comprehend that you can do it and enjoy yourself” (S, 32). For this same woman, a lack of support for travel plans was compounded by social expectations about appropriate female behaviour at her stage of life:

‘Particularly a lot of married women that I know, they couldn’t comprehend that it’s enjoyable. … Some of them think it’s a little bit crazy. Others think it’s a little bit decadent, you know, “look at all the money you’re spending on yourself” ’ (S, 32).

A married mother of five noted that her friends and acquaintances were ‘surprised’ that she would be going to South America without her husband and

* Australian/British colloquialism for relatives or relations.
family: ‘A few people said, “oh, I couldn’t go on my own” and some - actually quite a lot - were surprised that I was going on my own – “well, aren’t you going with a friend?”’, or, “what about your daughter, or your son?”’ (P, 54).

Solo travel was also perceived by significant others to be an activity deemed socially suitable only for younger women. Due to these perceptions, several women who had travelled solo in their forties, fifties and sixties struggled to justify their travel desires to others:

‘I think [for] younger women travelling alone, it’s much more acceptable because people see travelling as a certain stage in people’s lives. .... And then they come back and settle down and get married, you know, ‘properly’, whereas I think if you’re travelling when you’re older on your own, I think there’s more of a person’s lost – “where are their families, where’s their husband?” .... There is that social thing about being with your family and, you know, “what are you doing having the freedom to do that?”’ (M, 49).

‘I suppose I’m also in an age group where people are more likely to have homes and families and educating children and things like that, so the idea that you can spend your money on travel when you’re in your 30s: “oh, you should have done that in your 20s, you should be married and having babies now”. ... Again, that whole perception of what I should be doing and what others expect of me’ (S, 32).

4.2.2 Socio-Cultural (In-situ)

4.2.2.1 Host Attitudes

While elements of the social inappropriateness of women travelling solo were experienced by participants in their home environments, this category of constraint also carried over into the solo travel experience itself. When travelling alone in other countries, many women found that they met with sentiments of disapproval expressed by others, usually local men. This disapproval appeared to be directly related to the fact that the women were Western, and that they were travelling alone and unchaperoned by men:
‘In Indonesia and Java I found I copped a lot of unpleasantness just being a Western female. … Some cultures definitely look at single woman travelling alone with a very different cultural outlook, and you’re conscious of it’ (C, 45).

‘I mean if you’re in a culture that women don’t get around on their own, then you really can have a hard time’ (C, 62).

The perceptions of local people towards Western solo women travellers appeared to change, depending on which country the women were travelling in and its dominant cultural outlook on women. Muslim countries were perceived by the women as places where disapproval towards Western females was more prevalent:

‘I think the fact that I was just a Western woman by myself was really bad … just the attitude of - particularly more Muslim countries - towards Westerners was really bad as well, and towards women was even worse. … I was on a train going to Marrakech from Tangier and women wouldn’t sleep in the same carriage, ’cause it was segregated by sex, the women wouldn’t sleep with me … they all had this opinion that I was this whore and they wouldn’t let me into their carriage’ (M, 31).

‘Egypt was more challenging because there were more unknowns and the role of and attitudes towards women were very different to any other country I had been in’ (A, 52).

‘In Morocco, the women, ’cause they were all covered, they hated you. Like they didn’t like you because they could see their men carrying on and they blamed you’ (W, 23).

In some cases, male disapproval was frustrating as it limited some women’s interaction with the local people. One woman found when travelling through Muslim Pakistan that she was largely ignored and excluded from conversations with local men, which in turn led to her enjoyment being reduced and her sense of independence thwarted. As she explained:

‘People didn’t talk to me there. I was travelling with a man there, who I’d just met, and basically no one would ever talk to me. It was really upsetting for me. Like, I would

* Australian/British colloquialism for ‘to suffer something’.
ask the question ... and they would direct their answer to him and they wouldn’t even
look at me and it would really embarrass them to think that I had spoken. ... Like, I
learned in that situation just to shut up and let him do it all, but that didn’t really make
me all that happy. ... It was a difficult experience because I’m used to being strong and
independent and finding my own way here and there, and then to have to let someone
be in charge of doing everything’ (A, 25).

Outside Muslim countries, certain resort islands in Greece were reported as
particularly difficult for one solo traveller. In Crete, she perceived that men saw
women ‘as just their property, you know. They were just there for them – they
were loose and they were just tourists. ... So you got that feeling there very
clearly’ (M, 38).

Latino cultures in places like South America and Spain appeared to share similar
attitudes to Western women travelling alone. One woman noted male disapproval
as she travelled throughout Ecuador: ‘They didn't approve of a woman travelling
on their own because a lot of them would feel that it gave their own wives ideas. ... I
mean, a woman went to market, yes, and did the shopping and worked and
managed to go and visit a relative, but you didn't go and travel on your own ... It
was just something that made them uncomfortable and they didn't want to think
that their wives should be allowed to do that sort of thing’ (P, 54). Reactions in
Spain were of a similar nature: ‘There are some places you just feel vulnerable
and threatened ‘cause of the way men react to you, like in the Latin countries I felt
that way, and some parts of Spain, for example’ (C, 45).

Travelling through Kenya, this same woman reported being viewed as a ‘slut’
because of her Western style of dress and the way she sat: ‘You realise you’re
regarded as a slut or a prostitute, sometimes just ‘cause you’re Western.
Sometimes ‘cause of the way you sit. I remember, in Africa, some person came
over to me and asked me politely if I would change my seating posture because I
was sitting like a Western woman and I was upsetting all the men and I’d
apparently caused great havoc’ (C, 45).
Attitudes and perceptions towards women in Japan could also frustrate and hamper the women’s enjoyment of the culture: ‘It’s so constricted ... the roles of women the society really shocked me and how there’s not a lot of respect for women ... and they have very traditional female roles in the family and men would speak to me in a certain way, very patronisingly’ (A, 25).

**4.2.2.2 Unwanted Attention**

A predominant constraint which emerged from the socio-cultural milieu at the destination was unwanted attention by men. While mostly in the form of staring or verbal catcalls, this attention could also manifest as blatant physical and sexual forms of harassment in a variety of countries and contexts. Details of harassment were common across women’s stories, and evidenced through descriptions of the women being groped, fondled, catcalled, verbally abused, subjected to perverted acts, robbed and, in one case, raped. Generally, women reported being seen as sexually ‘available’ because they were alone and/or not travelling with men. This could lead to fatigue and a heightened sense of personal fear and vulnerability, as women continually were sensitive to attack.

As with the women’s experiences of disapproval regarding their solo female status, most accounts of harassment and unwanted attention were reported in Muslim, Latin or Hindu cultures such as India, Italy, Spain, Indonesia and Morocco, as well as in other patriarchal countries such as Greece and Turkey. This harassment could become problematic and worked to constrain and limit their travel freedoms, sense of personal space, ease of movement and access to places and events.

A dominant feature of the harassment in all countries was its relentlessness, as shown by the similarities demonstrated in several women’s stories. As a result, the overall enjoyment of the experience could be diminished, as some women had to reduce their travel experience in terms of time and location:
‘In Crete, you just couldn’t sit down on your own for five seconds, so you really had to pair up with someone, you know, because otherwise you’d just be harassed’ (M, 49).

‘All I wanted to do was sit on the bank of the Nile and look out across to the Valley of the Kings … and you couldn't sit anywhere without men coming up and accosting you’ (A, mid 50s).

‘Walking down to go and get a bit of fruit from some stall in India, you’d be catcalled the whole time. … It just happened every time, like so frequently, no matter where I was and no matter what town ... and so you couldn’t help but take offence to it’ (J, 43).

‘[The tourist areas in India] are where you have the most problems with men, either going to touch you or just being really blatantly, not necessarily rude, but just slimy, for want of a better word, and kind of will chatter on for ages about women in the West’ (N, 20).

‘Unwanted male attention was sometimes a problem. I had to remain on guard which can limit your experiences and people you meet. It was a matter of trying to strike a balance between cautious and open/trusting. However, this is not only a travel issue; I just felt more aware of my safety when alone for long periods of time than when in my own country’ (H, 19).

The more mature age of some of the solo women travellers did not seem to deter the harassment, with women noting that while travelling through countries like Greece and Indonesia they still attracted attention. When travelling throughout Greece in her thirties, one woman reported that:

‘At one stage when I went out of the main town in Crete, a young boy about fifteen, he had a little moped thing, and I was just walking down the hill, and he actually sort of physically grabbed me ... it was a real shock, it was like he was only fifteen, maybe not even that’ (M, 49).

‘All throughout Indonesia, everywhere I went – I was harassed. And it didn’t matter, the ages of the men to how old I was. Like men as young as like, twenty-something. Mainly the younger men that were harassing, yeah. Not men my age or older ... the young men were harassing me for sex, wanting to be my ”special friend” ’ (P, 42).
For other women who had travelled in their late thirties and forties, similar experiences were related:

‘In Indonesia, guys just approached me all the time, you know. It didn’t matter how old you were. I mean, I was already 38 by then. It didn’t make any difference’ (M2, 49).

Given these types of scenarios, some women also described having to be constantly aware of their surroundings and the effects that their female form might present in certain cultures:

‘I did get followed in various places. Once in Sumatra and once in Bali – I had someone try and break into my room. … I just walked down the street one day and said hello to someone and he followed me back to where I was staying. … He went away and then later than night … he came back and he was knocking on the window … he was trying to get in the door and I had it locked’ (P, 42).

‘I had this experience where this guy just constantly hung around my hotel. Simply because one morning or one evening or something as we walked past each other in a little narrow stone corridor, he’d smiled and said, “good evening” and I smiled back and said, “good evening”. And from then on this man was just there, you know, assuming that you’ve actually said, “yes, sure I’ll sleep with you”!’ (C, 45).

Predominantly, the harassment was from local men in these areas, and to a lesser extent local women, but reports of unwanted attention from male travellers were also given: ‘I get approached a lot as a single woman, and it’s not just from the locals, it’s from the other travellers as well … just that they might think that you’re available when you’re not, you know. Unwanted attention, you could say’ (K, 31).
4.3 Personal

Closely related to the socio-cultural context, a second category of constraint emerged which centred on the women’s personal beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. At the precedent stage, the women’s personal constraints reflected the existence of perceived doubts and fears regarding their ability to travel solo, and which were closely linked to a lack of travel experience. During travel, personal constraints lingered, with feelings of fear and vulnerability still evident as they negotiated their solo journeys. Loneliness and isolation were also noted as a distinct personal theme of constraint, which could exacerbate the women’s feelings of fear and vulnerability and sense of aloneness.

4.3.1 Personal (Precedent)

4.3.1.1 Doubts and Fears

Prior to departure, many of the women spoke of fear as a limiting factor. Here they expressed a struggle with finding their own self-confidence and being overwhelmed by imaginings of what lay ahead at the destination. For a few women, feelings of fear and self-doubt were evident in other aspects of their lives as well. For example, some battled low self-esteem and fear on a daily basis in their lives, making it difficult for them to find the courage to satisfy their life goals and travel dreams. As one woman expressed, dealing with fear had been a lifetime struggle which emanated from a violent childhood:

‘As a child I had a great deal of fear of my father’s anger and violence and that permeated into every area of my life. This fear went on well into my life until about 35. … The most prominent feeling I have is fear. Fear I will not be able to do it, fear I won’t be able to do it right, fear my mind will remain a blank. … When fear has its claws in me, it has been very hard to escape’ (E, 62).

Fears and doubts impacted on the women by delaying departure or reducing their willingness to leave. Feelings of self-doubt and fear, seemed closely linked to the women’s prior experience of solo travel, and thus were felt most profoundly by those on their first solo trip abroad:
'The closer it got, I must admit it got a bit scary ... and when I actually took off, and it was a bit like, what have I done?!' (J, 38).

'I remember in the last few months before going, I was seeking a lot of reassurance from [my boyfriend] because this was way out of my comfort zone' (J, 43).

'I was scared to death ... I was nearly crying at the airport – oh my God, what am I doing? I'd never been out, been over there on my own before' (L, 44).

'I was scared and uptight, because I hadn't done anything like that before. ... I was utterly on my own, all I had was my return ticket so I had no idea what I was going to encounter' (P, 64).

'I was scared about not knowing where to go, what to do ... I think it's getting from A to B, because I've got no sense of direction whatsoever' (P, 42).

Even for women with a history of solo travel, a considerable time lag between overseas trips could lead to fear and self-doubt: 'I think because I had a big gap between my last really big trip and this last trip, I actually think I got a bit more scared, less brave, when I was about to leave ... about a week beforehand I had quite a big panic about going away on my own ... but I had this huge driving force to do it on my own, so it was just a moment of unconfidence, really' (M, 38).

Age was another factor which led to a sense of doubt and fear regarding the women’s capability to travel solo. A woman in her late forties doubted her abilities to attract friendships and socialise with others while travelling: ‘I don’t know how it would be now as an older woman ... I think young women naturally attract assistance or support ... but I don’t know that on my own I’d have the same amount of people coming to me as an older woman, than as a thirty-odd year old’ (M, 49). Another woman in her early forties reported similar sentiments, feeling that she was too ‘old’ for relating to other backpackers: ‘At my age I think I would feel a bit out of place on the backpacker circuit’ (D, 40).
4.3.2 Personal (In-situ)

4.3.2.1 Fear and Vulnerability

Similar to the personal fears and doubts that the women reported in their home environments, fear and vulnerability also surfaced as a prominent constraint on the women’s in-situ, solo travel experiences. Again, these feelings were strongly related to first-time travel experiences. For instance, two women told strikingly similar tales of arriving at foreign airports and being overwhelmed by an immobilising sense of fear:

‘When I got to the airport at Barcelona, I found it really difficult to step outside the doors. ... It was like stepping into a, I don’t know, into a video game or something, you know. Like everything was gonna be new and I knew that, and I was just frozen there like, “oh my God, what am I doing?” ‘ (S, 42).

‘I remember stepping off at the Lima airport ... and I’m walking out towards the double doors and there’s just this full-on number of Peruvian taxi drivers, probably about 10 rows deep, and I’m just going, “oh my God!”, and I just thought, “I’m not going out there, I’m not going out there!” ’ (R, 30).

Similarly, the first days or weeks were noted as times when women felt particularly fearful or overwhelmed:

‘For the first two weeks I was terrified ... I was so overwhelmed. And having to do everything on my own, and not knowing where to start ... just finding my way around and where to go when the bus stopped – I used to sit on the bus and think, I don’t want the bus to stop, because I’m okay while I’m on the bus’ (D, 40).

‘Early in the time ... with inexperience, there were problems, like fear of being lost, fear of nobody to talk to, where am I?, what’s this society? - if I hadn’t done my homework before I went to that country’ (C, 62).

‘I’d meet up with people and then we’d part ways, and it was like quite traumatic, because here I was on my own again, and it was really quite scary. I remember feeling pretty terrible at times, especially the first month’ (M, 49).

Feelings of fear were also related to the women’s own perception that travel was more difficult for females, and that they were more vulnerable than men to
instances of attack and sexual harassment. This perception of vulnerability limited their ability to fully enjoy the experience of travel and interact with the local culture:

‘As a woman travelling alone, the biggest thing is feeling unsafe, at times ... as a woman, that’s everyday life. You are more vulnerable, I think’ (M, 38).

‘I think women do have particular challenges ... I think the challenge is you’re more vulnerable as a woman, you know there is a sense of there’s more risk of unpleasant experiences ... you’re a more vulnerable target to being mugged, for example, than if you’re a bloke*, and having unpleasant sexual overtures and all that kind of thing’ (C, 45).

‘It’s been fairly confronting being a woman and travelling on my own sometimes ... you have to make decisions about where to stay or who to travel with, and if they are male, not having known them long, you have to just trust your instinct’ (A, 49).

One woman felt utterly powerless and unable to cope with the relentless male harassment. The reference points and rules which applied to men in her own country proved to be useless as she travelled through Indonesia: ‘I was ... feeling totally unable to protect myself in that situation. All the things that I had in my culture of dealing with men, wasn't there – there was nothing there for me. And I just didn't know how to handle them. Plus I was on my own and it's, you know, a totally strange culture’ (M2, 49).

4.3.2.2 Loneliness and Isolation

While many of the women in this study travelled alone by preference, they also expressed a strong desire for social interaction and achieved this by meeting up with other travellers or friends along the way. When the women wanted their own space, they would retreat from others and return to their independent status. However, an extended period without companions or social interaction could lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation and depression.

* Australian colloquialism for a male person.
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

Sharing the travel experience was important to some women, and at times their solo state could lead to feelings of isolation and an increased sense of vulnerability:

‘I found it really bizarre not being able to, at the end of the day, say to somebody, “wow, look at that!” or “isn’t this interesting!” ’ (A, 49).

‘The first three months or so were miserable, even though I was doing what I thought I loved most. I was extremely lonely’ (K, 31).

‘I just remember there were some times feeling utterly distraught, which were times when I was actually on my own between travelling with friends ... it was like the unknown because you never knew where you were going to be sleeping that night, and being on your own, you know’ (M, 49).

‘It's fun, but it also can be very lonely from time to time, and I think that's an aspect that everybody that's travelled by themselves for any length of time has found, too ... you do get lonely even if it's only for a day or two ... just sort of thinking, oh it'd be nice to have somebody to share this with’ (S, 40).

Some women reported feeling lonely and isolated because of their age, which links socio-culturally to women’s perceptions of their stage of the life cycle. Certain women felt ‘too old’ for solo travel or the ‘backpacker scene’. One woman who had travelled alone in her early sixties was invited along by younger travellers to visit places, but felt unwilling to go because of the age gap: ‘I thought, “oh, I won't go, I'm much older than them and I think they're only being nice” ’ (P, 64).

Another woman noted her loneliness and resultant boredom as she travelled solo across Spain: ‘It was lonely. It wasn't a challenge - it was boring. I was so over this lonely space ... it was just, oh God, now what, now what, now what? Just filling in all this time. ... it was just a struggle towards the end, to keep doing it, to think of things to do’ (S, 42). This feeling of loneliness has led to this woman questioning her desire for future solo travel.
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

While many of the women interviewed found that travelling alone was a benefit in terms of increasing opportunities for social interaction, some women craved contact with local women while travelling, but found that interactions were limited due to cultural, language and gender differences. This made the travelling experience difficult at times for the solo women, and somewhat isolating:

‘I found that you don’t really have a lot of contact with the women. It’s very hard to make contact with women’ (C, 62).

‘In Syria, the women didn’t come up and talk to me. But I met women in a bath house – they were the only women I met. … the only people who came up and talked to me was when I was in the restaurant’ (S, 45).

This loneliness and sense of isolation stemmed from the women travellers feeling as though they were perceived by the local women as ‘odd’, ‘crazy’ or ‘weird’ for travelling alone without family, husband or children. Again, such socio-cultural perceptions seemed to create in the women travellers a personal feeling that they were undertaking something strange and aberrant:

‘So many of the women that I met were just like, “oh, you’re travelling by yourself?”’, who were just shocked. … I think a lot of people are a bit sort of put off with independent, strong-willed women. … It’s just like, you can’t go anywhere without a husband or a boyfriend’ (A, 30).

‘You were seen as a little bit of an oddity … people actually did say, you know – there was comments. … You sort of had to make out that, you know, that someone was coming [to meet you] … I think I felt that. I felt a bit strange going on my own’ (M, 49).

‘I’d say “I’m on my own” and people are like, “What? By yourself?” … There were hardly any females travelling by themselves, so you felt a bit unusual’ (M, 31).

‘In some places … they just never go anywhere on their own. It’d be, it’s like a sad thing, it’s like you’re an outcast … only a crazy person walks around on their own. … Why would you leave behind your village and leave behind your family?’ (D, 40).
4.4 Practical

At the precedent stage, women were confronted by the practical constraints of a lack of money and time. While travelling solo, the women were further limited by an in-situ lack of local knowledge, such as an inability to speak the local language and get their bearings in unfamiliar locales. The practical difficulties of travelling with others were also mentioned as constraining factors when the women did join up with others during their journeys. In addition, the stress and fatigue associated with the practicalities of travelling alone were further noted.

4.4.1 Practical (Precedent)

4.4.1.1 Lack of Money and Time

A lack of money was perceived to be one of the major limiting factors impacting on women’s solo travel choices and opportunities. Limited money available for travel was often a result of life circumstances and backgrounds, as one woman succinctly noted: ‘Because I didn’t have the circumstances or the money, I didn’t travel before’ (E, 62). Substantial financial commitments to mortgages, raising children and self-education were also found to restrict the access women had to solo travel.

Women’s responsibility for raising children alone could limit the amount of money left over for travel. As one single mother noted: ‘When you have children there’s not the money to do those things that you had always imagined you would do, so you have to do it later, when the children have grown’ (A, 58). Having suffered the breakdown of two marriages, a lack of money was this woman’s prime reason for not being able to travel sooner than she did:

‘Having started again on my own, twice now, you know, you’re not exactly going to retire with millions, so it probably will be a paramount thing to make me decide that I’m going to be an armchair traveller or a real one’ (A, 58).
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

For those women who could allocate money to travel, there were continuing concerns about the extent of their budget which in turn set boundaries to their travel opportunities:

‘Money’s the biggest constraint for independent travelling - it sort of does dictate what you do some of the time’ (M, 38).

‘A big constraint has always been money. It limits me a lot from what I do and where I go and how I do things sometimes. Because if you’re on a limited budget, you can’t perhaps do all the things you might have liked to have done’ (A, 49).

For three single women, committing to buying houses and paying off mortgages limited their travel opportunities:

‘I had taken on this mortgage for nine years when I separated from my husband, it was a very big mortgage … and it occurred to me how fragile life really is and I knew I had all these travel plans and I wanted to do all these goals. It was always gonna be when I’m this, when I’m that, I’ll do this’ (A, 45).

‘My only regret is that I didn’t do it earlier in my twenties as I’d planned, and when I bought my house instead. I’m a bit worried that I’m running out of time. … How am I gonna fit it all in?’ (D, 40).

‘With financial commitments of the house, you know, you want to come back to a job. I think you get a little more set in your ways, or you know, get more security conscious with age … you have a house, you’ve gotta pay a mortgage as well, so that’s the drawback. I think I’d do a lot more travelling if I didn’t have a house’ (S, 40).

Commitments to study and higher education also meant fewer dollars available for travel and could delay travel plans, as one woman found: ‘I had lots of friends who lived at home and who were able to afford to save, and I never had much of that option when I was growing up because I put myself through uni, and all of my savings went into keeping myself at uni, so I actually didn’t do a lot of travel when I was younger. … It wasn’t until I was 25 that I actually did my first overseas trip’ (R, 30).
4.4.2 Practical (In-situ)

4.4.2.1 Lack of Local Knowledge

During their solo travels, some women reported feeling constrained in their ability to interact with others due to a lack of local knowledge which included language, cultural mores and geographical understanding. Certainly these are not constraints unique to women travellers, nor to solo travellers, yet a lack of local knowledge could exemplify the women’s vulnerability to such constraints and diminish their capabilities to deal with harassment. To exemplify this point, two women described how their inability to speak the local language made them feel vulnerable as solo females:

'It’s very hard to judge, so I always feel that if you’re in a foreign place, well, just don’t put yourself in any situation, on your own, where you might get into difficulties, particularly when you don’t have the language’ (A, 58).

'It was very scary being in countries and not being able to speak the language’ (S, 45).

Not being proficient in the local language was also a key source of frustration, as it limited their ability to interact with local people and to fully experience and understand the culture of a destination:

'In Spain there was hardly [any] English, and that got really frustrating, actually, ‘cause you kind of really can only get halfway with someone’ (M, 38).

'There was a bit of frustration with the language barrier ... in particular there would be other women I would really want to communicate with, and I couldn’t communicate to them ... that really was probably the main frustration that I actually had when travelling’ (J, 38).

'I would call myself a fairly sociable person, and I found it really frustrating not having a good demand of Spanish, because I find in connecting with people generally, I like to get to know people, and when you can’t, you can’t rely on your language abilities, it makes – it’s a whole lot more challenging’ (R, 30).
‘I didn’t want to go out. ... In the morning I’d get up and I’d think, “oh I just cannot face that I’m gonna have to try and speak in Indonesian again, and people are gonna come and talk to me”. It was a very depressing time’ (M2, 49).

### 4.4.2.2 Travelling with Others

Most women in this study travelled solo of their own will, and enjoyed their independent status. However this did not mean that they were alone for the entirety of the journeys. Many of the women spoke of the convenient benefits of linking up with others at certain times during their travels. Travelling with others provided a sense of security, social interaction and eased some of the practical hardships of travelling alone. Conversely, several women noted limitations on their solo travel related to joining up with others. This was particularly the case if the women’s travel styles and expectations were not shared by their companions. If philosophies or personalities differed too greatly, companions fast became a hindrance, rather than an addition, to the travel experience.

For example, certain companions were seen as a social liability, preventing women from meeting other travellers and interacting with local people:

‘You notice when you’re with someone else or especially one other person, how you can get lost in that little world, in a bubble of English, and without those people you’re just absorbed, you’re out there’ (N, 20).

‘If you’re on your own, people will come to you, to talk to you, to find out about you. If you’re with a companion, they leave you alone, because you’re talking to the companion, and they’re intruding’ (C, 62).

Others felt that their capacities to make independent decisions were constrained when travelling with others:

‘If you’re with someone else, you share the responsibilities of getting around, making decisions etc, but you’re probably on the whole more limited in your capacity to relate to other people’ (C, 45).
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

‘The people that I went with didn’t really want to travel and I felt stifled by that. There was lots of things that I wanted to do but because I felt I wanted to please them, I didn’t do what I wanted to do’ (J, 45).

‘When you travel with somebody, even if it’s only one other person, you’ve got to confer with them as to “do you want to stay here?”, and they may not want to stay an extra week, whereas you’ve met some nice people and would just like to stay here a few more days ... they’ll push you on to the next spot and sometimes they can hold you back’ (S, 40).

‘You need to be careful ... with who [you] travel, because if you’re not getting on with them and you have to compromise too much, it can just make your trip awful’ (A, 49).

For two experienced solo women travellers, companions who were new to travel soon became a burden, as the women felt personally responsible for their well-being and safety:

‘The few times I travelled with somebody else, I felt I was playing mother a little bit, like they haven’t had the experience, so I was teaching them to travel. And that was a bit of a burden’ (C, 62).

‘One guy, he just hated a lot of things, and he just wanted the comforts of home and he never tried to learn another language and things like that. ... So that was like a big conflict ... that was very stressful. ... I think because I yearn so much to have this experience and always wanted to have great experiences, that if someone kind of ruins my expectation or me wanting to enjoy something, then that’s when it really gets to me’ (M, 31).

4.4.2.3 Stress and Fatigue

Stress and fatigue were reported as further practical constraints on their solo travel experiences. For many women, solo travel could be a difficult, stressful and tiring experience at times, which could compound feelings of loneliness:

‘It’s more stressful travelling on your own in a lot of ways’ (J, 55).
‘Something I hate about travelling alone is having to be so careful with your bag, and it gets very tiring. ... When you’ve got your pack, and you want to go to the toilet, you can’t just leave your pack just sitting there, ‘cause it gets nicked’ ... you feel really alone at times. Like if you’ve got someone with you, they’d watch things for you. It gets tiring’ (M, 38).

The general hardships of solo travel were that women became tired, but often they also became ill and their bodies run down: ‘I have to admit there are days you do get down, you get very tired... so you have to learn to slow it down a little. You’re out of your comfort zone and it is stressful. I always lose a lot of weight, but your body is stressed and then your adrenalin is going. ... Tiredness can be a thing and I often found when I first started out, I did get a lot of colds, because your body got so run down’ (P, 64).

Becoming overly stressed and fatigued were seen as potential threats to women’s safety, as being ill and not having full control over their bodies could increase feelings of vulnerability and fear:

‘When you’re really tired, and you’re travelling with someone, you can just let loose, and sort of say, “I can’t cope with it – you just do it”. ... But when you’re on your own you can’t - you have to be there all the time, you have to be like as focussed as you possibly can to look for accommodation – and safe accommodation. I mean safety obviously is a pretty big issue’ (J, 38).

‘I did get very ill in India, and that was quite scary because I didn’t know what was wrong with me, the medical guys I had couldn’t work it out ... what I might have, so therefore what to do wasn’t clear, fortunately the hotel provided me with bottled water. ... It was quite frightening, I didn’t know what to do’ (A, 52).

Being away from home and usual eating habits could also lead to fatigue, and this could hamper the travel experience by making them feel tired as well as apprehensive about experiencing local cuisine:

* Australian colloquialism for ‘stolen’.
'I'm pretty strict with what I eat generally – I'm pretty full-on healthy vegetarian and so for me eating oily foods - I can handle it but it doesn't make me feel all that happy over a period of time like that and I found it quite exhausting' (A, 25).

'I lost a lot of weight ... you sort of forget to look after yourself a little bit. I don’t like eating out on my own so I tend not to go to restaurants and I just pick up a piece of fruit here and there and I found I didn’t look after my health and I came back very ill. ... You’ve got to look after yourself when you travel by yourself. There’s no one else there’ (J, 45).

4.5 Spatial

The fourth category of constraint to emerge from the women’s stories relates to their perceived capacity to move freely within certain spaces and settings. For these women, spatial constraints were both geographic and temporal, with women reporting feeling limited in their ability to move freely within certain spaces and at certain times of the day. At a precedent level, spatial constraints led to a limited destination choice, in that women felt restricted in terms of the destinations on offer which would be safe and accessible for a solo female traveller. Spatial limitations, however, were noted more prevalently during the travel experience itself, where women encountered a level of restricted movement in terms of where it was acceptable and ‘safe’ to go. There was also a feeling of conspicuousness under a consistent male gaze, which could also work to limit their freedom of movement when in certain tourist spaces and places.

4.5.1 Spatial (Precedent)

4.5.1.1 Limited Destination Choice

Pre-travel, women perceived that their access to certain tourist destinations and places was limited. In large part, this perception was founded on an anticipation of vulnerability that stemmed from their understanding of other countries’ attitudes regarding solo Western females.
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

As a region, the ‘Middle East’ was considered out of reach to one solo woman, as she considered future travel plans: ‘Going to the Middle East might be a different kettle of fish. I don’t know how I’d feel about that – I don’t know whether I could deal with the whole cover-up business in certain countries’ (K, 31). Morocco was also considered by some to be ‘off limits’ to solo female travellers: ‘I’d love to go to Morocco ... but I’m not sure Morocco is a place that you would like to be wandering around in on your own as a woman. I don’t think I would’ (A, 52).

In addition, hearing of other female travellers’ stories of harassment could affect the women, leading them to rule out certain destinations and countries based on these accounts:

‘I was thinking of going to Italy, but I’d heard that men were worse there so I didn’t go to Italy’ (M, 49).

‘It was either Asia or South America. They’re the only two destinations that I really wanted to go to. I had thought about Africa but I heard of women getting raped’ (P, 42).

‘There’s places that I didn’t go, that I might have gone if I hadn’t been on my own, like Morocco, for instance. Or Turkey ... I just heard enough other reports from people to make me feel that I’d be really vulnerable and uncomfortable as a woman alone ... or that you might get hassled, and not enjoy the experience’ (C, 45).

Personal experiences also informed this constraint category, with previous encounters of harassment working to restrict women’s selection of travel destinations: ‘I had some really nasty experiences which made me a little bit wary of travelling in some countries on my own’ (J, 55). For another woman, a lack of personal confidence related to a fear of attracting unwanted attention as a woman travelling alone. This fear led to her doubting her ability to travel alone throughout the USA, which was a long-held ambition: ‘It’s the States, driving out of the way roads, this sort of thing - I will be obvious to people that I’m on my own’ (S, 32).
While the stories above highlight that women felt internally restricted because of their own perceptions about the safety of some countries, others found that their choices were made for them. Due to a government policy in Iran, for example, one woman was refused a visa to that country simply because she was a Western woman.

4.5.2 Spatial (In-situ)

4.5.2.1 Restricted Movement

Several women gave descriptions of feeling a sense of restriction in their abilities to move comfortably and freely in certain tourist spaces and places. This restricted movement was generally tied to socio-cultural mores and attitudes about solo women travellers and the places in which it was deemed appropriate for them to move. Two women, for example, spoke of concern expressed by local people regarding their solo status. These reactions perpetuated a perception that spaces such as isolated trains and rural areas were unsafe for women:

‘I remember once in Spain I was in a train carriage by myself and a man came in and he was completely freaked out and he was like “why are you by yourself? It’s really dangerous – don’t you know how dangerous this is?” ’ (M, 31).

‘A few times in Hungary, people warned us, saying “you don’t walk around these parts” ... like we were in the rural, rural areas to go and see these wild caves ... people picking us up, going, ”you girls don’t walk around here” ’ (J, 31).

Linked to a lack of local knowledge, one woman unwittingly offended others when riding a local bus in Thailand by being in the wrong space and place: ‘I got a bus in Bangkok, like a public bus with a lot of Thai people in it ... I sat next to this monk, and this Australian man came up to me on the bus and said, “you’re not allowed to sit there, women can’t sit next to monks” ’ (M, 49).

Travelling alone in Spain, another woman felt sufficiently uncomfortable with the harassment so that she chose to remain inside the safety of her hostel room: ‘In
Madrid, I was there for two days on my own and I felt quite unsafe because of this huge level of muggings and theft ... and as a woman on your own - yeah, I felt very, very unusually unsafe. I didn’t like it. I stayed in my room. ... It’s such a different reality if you’re on your own as a female’ (M, 38).

Side alleys, dark streets and isolated villages were considered by some women to be dangerous locations for solo females. There was a general perception by the women themselves that they were restricted to areas within an intangible ‘safety sphere’, located around major tourist centres. Women felt they should not venture outside of this sphere, perceiving that the risk of attack or harassment would be increased. They tried to stay where they ‘were meant to be’:

‘I certainly did not as a single traveller go down dark alleys or anything like that’ (J, 43).

‘I never, ever go into side streets in strange cities or anything like that. I stick to the main route – because I wandered around Cairo an awful lot and I never had any trouble. But I stuck to the main touristy areas and places like that. I didn't go into any areas where I wasn't meant to be’ (A, mid 50s).

Spatial constraints were compounded by some women’s perception of solo travel as ‘easier for men’. One woman felt restricted in her abilities to visit remote villages and ‘off the beaten track’ areas, for no other reason than that she was a female. As a result, this woman believed her tourist experience was incomplete, and felt that if she had been male, her travel opportunities and abilities to interact with local people would have been greater:

‘When I was in Vanuatu I would’ve travelled a lot more - gone to villages and done a lot more to sort of really try to get much more of a feel on a personal level, of local cultures and village life and stuff like that, which I think I would’ve been confident to do if I’d been a man, but I didn’t feel confident to do as a woman. ... There was a couple times that I drew back from doing a couple of things cause I thought it might be wiser if I didn’t. ... I would have loved to have spent more time just sort of travelling in the bush, and having interesting experiences, but I guess I was just a bit more nervous about doing it, you know ... taking the plunge and really going off the beaten track,'
which I would’ve done I think if I felt more confident, which I would’ve if I were a bloke’ (C, 45).

Temporally, the night was regarded as the most unsafe time for women to travel alone in tourist settings. As noted previously, dark streets and alleys were generally regarded as unsafe spaces for solo female travellers. Due to a feeling of exceptional vulnerability at night, women were constrained as their choice of activity was curtailed:

‘To tell you the truth I was really quite conscious of it - places like Mexico where I knew it was a little bit more dangerous, I wouldn’t go out at night. I’d actually make sure that I was in the hostel at a decent hour. I guess they were some of the constrictions and restraints’ (J, 38).

‘You make sure you’re not on your own … just keep away from dark streets … and that I think would be across the board for a male or female, but especially female because you’re more vulnerable’ (M, 38).

‘As an independent traveller I encountered challenges that I may not have encountered had I been with a group, perhaps more so as I was an independent woman traveller. I occasionally felt vulnerable at night looking for a place to stay’ (H, 19).

It should be noted that while specific reference was made to certain countries regarding spatial restriction and safety at night (eg. Mexico, Hungary, Spain, Vanuatu and Egypt, among others), the quotes shown above demonstrate a broad association connecting the dark with reduced safety for women, and are not necessarily country- or religion-specific.

4.5.2.2 Conspicuousness

Many women spoke of feeling conspicuous because of being a female form under the constant eye of the male ‘gaze’. This gaze worked so that some solo women travellers reported feeling uncomfortably obvious and self-conscious in certain settings and spaces:

‘I suppose when I have been on my own, I have felt pretty self-conscious in that you think people are staring at you and wondering about you’ (D, 40).
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

‘Women don’t ever walk on their own so I was again a source of people staring. ... Just the fact that I was a woman on my own, not dressed from head to toe in black, I was an absolute source of fascination. People would just about walk off the sidewalk staring at me’ (S, 45).

This feeling of conspicuousness limited the spaces and times of day in which women felt they could move safely and freely, as well as limiting the interaction that the women could have with local people:

‘Sometimes ... it was quite oppressive. It was an attitude towards women, and women alone, you know, so just walking around the streets at night on your own in some places - it was just asking for trouble, that men would regard that as like an open insult and that it was of a necessity that they should spit at the ground at your feet just to show you that you shouldn’t be doing that, or that you didn’t belong there or that it wasn’t proper for a woman to be doing it or something, or they just don’t like women! ... So that makes you feel vulnerable’ (C, 45).

‘Particularly Malaysia and Thailand, being alone there I sometimes felt a bit obvious. Especially being a woman by myself ... I experienced a bit of unwanted attention. Actually it wasn’t just there it was everywhere, really - you just get more unwanted attention ‘cause, you know, you’re not with anybody’ (H, 19).

‘In India and Kashmir, I’d have 40, 50 men sitting around just staring. I’d be drinking my chai, and they’d be just staring, and they won’t say a word, just stare ... because of the way they were there was a really limited sort of interaction you could have with the men’ (J, 31).

Feeling conspicuous as a female form on public transport could also create a sense of frustration and vulnerability, leading to a sense of limited enjoyment and reduced choice of activity:

‘I had this horrible experience of getting on a bus and being just manhandled the whole time ... men, you know, pinching my bum and tweaking my breasts and rubbing themselves up against me and all this horrible stuff ... you just feel like ... because you’re female, men just can’t relate to you in any other way but on the sexual level’ (C, 45).
'In Indonesia ... I was the only white woman – foreign white woman – on the bus with all these locals and they just watched every single thing I did. I couldn't scratch my butt, I couldn't do anything without like, probably half a dozen of them just standing there staring at me. And I had this little hole about the size of a fifty cent piece in the front of my pants which I'd tore in Laos and the men would just stare at this white flesh, absolutely mesmerised ... I couldn't do anything. I couldn't, like, eat anything without them seeing what I was eating, how I was eating. When I went to the toilet they would watch’ (P, 42).

4.6 Constraints: A Qualifier

While constraints were readily identified by the majority of women, it must be pointed out that some reported they had experienced ‘no’ solo travel constraints. Comments of this nature are included in this section as a form of ‘disconfirming evidence’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and to provide evidence of ‘dissimilarity’ (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In this way, women whose viewpoints differed from the majority are recognised. Such refuting evidence does not negate the validity of the constraints theme, but acknowledges that women have a diversity of experience and opinion.

For example, a few participants clearly wanted to downplay fear and harassment as constraints to solo female travel: ‘I’ve never felt threatened being a woman on my own’ (D, 57). ‘In the villages, especially the Adavasi villages in India, [I] didn’t have one single problem with men, and they didn’t even look sideways - they wanted their own women’ (N, 20). Another woman challenged the fear associated with being alone in unfamiliar places at night by stating that she ‘felt safer overseas at night than being here [at home]’ (P, 42).

Several women were also reluctant to emphasise fear as a constraint on their solo travel, seeing that fear was something they could avoid through not dwelling on it:

‘I think I was probably being too fearful of situations, and I think just waiting for something to happen, or reading things to be perhaps a bit too sinister when they’re not ... you can be too over-reactive and protective about what it is that you do, and then perhaps potentially miss out on some interesting things’ (R, 30).
‘I had very few problems. ... I had absolutely no fear’ (N, 20).

‘I’m not worried about safety because I have no fear of dying ... we’re all gonna die eventually, so it doesn’t matter where I die’ (P, 42).

One woman became frustrated when the topic of fear associated with solo travel was raised during interviews. While readily acknowledging that fear was evident in her life, she was reluctant to over-emphasise its role and impact on women: ‘I’ll have conversations about fear, like the one we’re having now, but I refuse to have conversations about fear that perpetuate fear – that are feeding it and nourishing it’ (S, 42).

A number of women’s stories differed markedly from others’ perceptions that Muslim and Hindu societies were the most difficult for solo females. This demonstrates that blanket constraints associated with certain religions do not fit the experiences of all of the women interviewed. As such, the women’s experiences of harassment tended to depend on the particular country in which they were travelling and its dominant attitude to women in general:

‘It's just so safe in Syria. You know, there are no attacks on women ... it's just very, very safe. I mean, I would go out at ten, eleven o’ clock at night ... walk around on my own’ (S, 45).

‘Walking around Khartoum at night ... you could with complete safety walk around anywhere and know you were completely safe because, although it’s a very Muslim society, any kind of violence or aggression towards women was like virtually unheard of. ... It really depends a lot [on the culture]’ (C, 45).

‘In India I was never hassled at all – hardly ever. On my first trip there I spent two months I think, and it was fine’ (M, 31).

While problems did occur during solo travel, these were not consciously recognised by the women as negative incidents, and were seen as issues that could be easily ‘managed’:
CHAPTER 4: Results (Constraints)

‘I think I must go around pretty unapproachable, so I’ve really had no hassles at all ...
I think that the only thing I’ve had is that someone put their hand on my thigh and, you
know, I just managed’ (A, 52).

‘I didn’t have anything that I think of as really bad happening to me. I mean,
somebody tried to mug me once, and actually I was quite proud of how I coped with
that’ (C, 45).

‘[In India] I had inevitable little problems with men, but nothing serious’ (N, 20).

During interviews with the women, there was some confusion over what was
meant by the word ‘constraint’. It appeared that many consciously perceived
constraints to be ‘bad things’ that happened during solo travel, such as theft,
sexual harassment or serious illness. As a result, constraints were not always
consciously recognised by the women as they were not aware of their impact.
When asked about constraints and solo travel, several women automatically stated
that ‘nothing bad had ever happened to them’, that they had experienced ‘no
constraint’. Yet closer examination of their lives, backgrounds and solo travel
experiences, accessed through further questioning, revealed stories of limitation,
restriction and constraint. This is a result that has been shown in other research
focusing on constraints and women, as Henderson (1997; p. 455) points out:
“some people say that nothing prevents them from leisure but then describe
constraints in other explicit and implicit way at other points during the interview”.

As the researcher and interpreter, I needed to consider what the women were
saying and look more closely at the contexts and meanings behind what was being
said. In this study, being a mother or wife were identified as constraints despite
the fact that most of the women might not have consciously viewed them as such.
The roles of wife or mother are, by definition, events in women’s lives which
have restricted their ability to travel and to achieve life dreams, and were thus
interpreted as constraining factors rather than as mere choices or occurrences.
4.7 Summary

The 40 women who participated in this study clearly had the opportunity and the circumstances to travel. As shown in Chapter 3, most of these women were from socially, economically and educationally ‘privileged’ positions, which allowed them the finances, support and confidence to travel abroad alone. Yet the results outlined above demonstrate the perceived and very real constraints that women face in their everyday lives and during their solo travel experiences.

Four categories of constraint emerged from a grounded analysis of the women’s own words and experiences. These categories related to the socio-cultural context, women’s personal attitudes and beliefs, the practical challenges of solo travel as well as the spatial limitations which constrained the women in a geographical sense. As demonstrated, constraints could impact at different levels of the solo travel experience. ‘Precedent’ constraints worked to limit women’s solo travel choices and opportunities, and stemmed largely from the societal milieu operating in the women’s home environments. Social expectations and roles, appropriate notions of female behaviour and others’ opinions were important precedent influences on the women’s preferences and abilities to travel alone overseas. As the solo travel experience was being lived, ‘in-situ’ constraints also impacted, arising from the socio-cultural norms and societal structures in existence at the destination as well as from the women’s own doubts and vulnerabilities regarding where it was safe to go.

This chapter has presented only one aspect of the women’s solo travel experiences: their reported constraints, limitations and challenges. Yet all of the women interviewed did travel solo, despite their constraints, revealing the women’s obvious desire and ability not to be bound by their constraints. As noted in Chapter 1, and based on recent insights in the constraints literature, this research also aimed to investigate how women might ‘negotiate’ their constraints to ensure access to and participation in solo travel. Against the backdrop of the women’s constraints presented here, the women’s negotiation strategies and coping mechanisms will now be considered in the following results chapter.
CHAPTER 5: ‘IT’D TAKE A LOT TO STOP ME!’: HOW WOMEN NEGOTIATE THE CONSTRAINTS OF SOLO TRAVEL

“The trip was easy. It was no more dangerous than crossing the street, or driving to the beach, or eating peanuts. The two important things that I did learn were that you are as powerful and strong as you allow yourself to be, and that the most difficult part of any endeavour is taking the first step, making the first decision.”

Robyn Davidson
(‘Tracks’, 1980; p. 247)

“A life lived in fear is a life half lived”

Germaine Greer
(‘The Whole Woman’, 1999; p. 349)

The results outlined in the previous chapter demonstrate that for the women interviewed in this study, their solo travel choices, options and experiences are constrained by an inter-linked range of socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial factors. Further analysis of the women’s interviews, however, revealed another theme related to their experience of constraint. This was a story where the women refused to be bound by their constraints and where their limitations did not necessarily act as reins, holding them back. Robyn Davidson, the Australian woman who crossed the Simpson Desert alone by camel, chose to refute her own and others’ notions that the journey was ‘dangerous’, as shown in the introductory quote to this chapter. Similar sentiments were echoed in the stories of the women interviewed in the present study. While constraints were evident and very real, the women also spoke of finding ways to deal with, alleviate and overcome - or to negotiate - their challenges and difficulties.

This chapter details and describes how the forty solo women travellers who participated in this study negotiated their constraints. The first section introduces
the three broad ‘responses’ that the women had to both their precedent and in-situ constraints. The following three sections deal with each of these responses in more detail, discussing the specific negotiation strategies which were utilised as part of each response. The final section provides a summary of the way in which these women negotiated their solo travel constraints.

5.1 Negotiation Responses and Strategies

From grounded analysis of the women’s interviews, three responses to constraint could be identified. A response is defined here as a broad-based reaction by the women to their overall pool of challenges and constraints, whether at the precedent or in-situ stage of the solo travel experience. Strategies are defined as the specific actions and behaviours the women utilised to cope and manage with their constraints, and act as the defining features, or sub-categories, that make up each of the responses.

The first response showed the women negotiating their precedent constraints by seeking access to the solo travel opportunities and experiences they desired. This response largely took place in the women’s home environments, prior to departure for travel. A second response to precedent constraints was not to seek access, but to withdraw from solo travel, either temporarily or permanently. Once travelling solo and facing a range of in-situ constraints, a third negotiation response came into play, whereby women chose to continue their solo journeys despite the apparent limitations and challenges. To summarise these three responses:

1. Access: This response to constraint saw the women use a number of strategies to deal with their precedent (pre-travel) constraints. By employing a positive and determined mindset, as well as by focusing on themselves and prioritising for travel, the women found ways to negotiate the constraints which worked to prevent their departure or limit their travel. The women also spoke of embracing their fears and active planning and preparing as strategies to overcome some of their
fears associated with solo travel. In these ways, the women in this study were negotiating constraint by actively acknowledging the benefits and positives and seeking ‘access’ to solo travel.

2. **Withdraw**: When confronted with precedent constraints, some women chose not to seek access but to withdraw from solo travel. Withdrawal strategies included postponing solo travel, deciding to share travel with others or to discontinue solo travel altogether. Negotiating by withdrawal was a result of a range of influences, including commitments to partners, work and changing motivations.

3. **Continue**: If women chose to seek access to travel, then they began their solo travel experiences and were often confronted with a new set of in-situ constraints. The women used a range of strategies so they could continue their journeys despite these constraints, including respecting and adapting to host cultures, modifying their dress and behaviour to fit local norms, self-protection, joining up with others. Some women also chose to leave or exit a country or destination in response to certain types of in-situ constraints, particularly harassment by local men.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of these three responses, and the distinct actions and strategies which were utilised by the women within each response. Each of these responses and strategies will now be discussed in turn.
Table 5.1: Negotiation ‘Responses’ and ‘Strategies’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiation Response</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Positive determination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-focus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prioritise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Embrace fear</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plan and prepare</td>
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<td>Withdraw</td>
<td>Postpone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Share travel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discontinue</td>
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<td>Continue</td>
<td>Respect and adapt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Modify dress/behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-protect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Join others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exit</td>
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5.2 Access

As stated previously, this broad negotiation response incorporated the women’s efforts to access solo travel and take advantage of travel opportunities. Through grounded coding of the women’s stories, five key negotiation strategies were identified as reflective of the ‘access’ response. These strategies were labelled **positive determination; self-focus; prioritise; embrace fear** and **plan and prepare**.

5.2.1 Positive Determination

Dominant across the women’s stories was a positive mindset, a willingness to face life’s challenges and a determination to not ‘miss out’ on the opportunities and benefits that solo travel could provide. In many cases, rather than deliberate on
and emphasise life’s disappointments, constraints were viewed as opportunities for personal growth through a process of overcoming challenge. Overall, these women seemed to have a great capacity to see the ‘good things’ in life, to laugh at their foibles and to learn from their mistakes along the way. A certain joie de vivre was evident in the women’s stories and attitudes, as was a keen passion and motivation for travel and for seeing the world.

While ‘positive determination’ was an overall feature of the women’s attitudes, it is emphasised here as an ‘access’ response to managing precedent constraints. It appeared that a positive and determined approach to life was more influential in the pre-travel stage, allowing women to overcome their precedent constraints and take the steps to travel solo. A positive outlook pervaded all facets of their solo travel experiences, but did not seem to exert such an important influence over constraints during travel as it did prior.

A notable sense of positive determination and strength of motivation was evident in almost all of the women’s stories. Applying positive philosophies, the women overcame constraints which might otherwise have stopped them from travelling. As one solo female traveller succinctly summed up: ‘It’d take a lot to stop me from travelling!’ (A, 49). These women were equipped with a confident belief that they could achieve any goal or dream, including solo travel, if they only tried:

‘I know I am capable of anything I set my heart to’ (A, 25).

‘Anything is possible! If I really want to do it, I can do it. It just means focus, and just that dream and desire. Anything is at my reach’ (J, 38).

‘You can do anything you want. ... You have to take a risk and yeah, you have to want it first. That’s the first step: you have to want to travel; you have to get passionate. You have to get passionate about what you want, and believe that you’re allowed to have it’ (D, 49).

‘It was just about saying yes to travel, and it was just about knowing that everything would be just fine’ (S, 42).
‘People say to me, “oh, well I’d really like to travel but I can’t because of...” and all these reasons why they can’t. Everyone can do whatever they like if they want to do it badly enough, and I really believe that. They’d say, “it’s easy for you, you’re single, you’ve got no children” – it’s all rubbish’ (D, 49).

‘There are so many things happening, but you’ve got to make travel happen ... gotta go out there and think, well this is what I want to do. ... Unless you change your life, no one else is going to do it for you’ (P, 64).

A belief in serendipity and fortuitousness was evident as the women trusted that life would unfold and take care of itself. Within many of the women lay a pragmatic conviction that despite certain setbacks, their lives would carry on and they would have the resources to deal with whatever came their way. Several quotes from the women’s stories demonstrate this:

‘It’s just a matter of finding that space within me that just trusts that everything will work out, and not at any point despairing, and it does. And I think that once you’ve got it it’s really hard to lose it, just that, that things work and that opportunities, amazing opportunities, arise just when you think everything’s going really badly. ... It’s always worked when I’ve been most confident and just happy and ready to see what happens and what comes around the next corner’ (N, 20).

‘Basically I trust in the universe ... you can’t force anything to happen and you just have to see which way the direction takes you’ (A, 25).

‘I think that is another thing that happens through life. You might get a disappointment here and there – [just] shrug it off. You can’t do anything about it, because there’s something better around the corner, and that’s exactly what’s happened ... I think that [travel] was something I’d always wanted to do, and I think you have to have a goal to get you through the tougher years ... you can go on and do whatever it is you want to do, if you have that mindset’ (D, 57).

‘I think if you’re willing to go and do it and face whatever comes your way, it works out good, most times. Sometimes you’ve got a bit of a struggle, but in the end, it’s good’ (S, 20).

While issues of aging emerged as part of the constraints identified, age was not viewed as a barrier to solo travel. There was evidence of positive resistance to
aged stereotypes, where women saw themselves as healthy, active beings who planned to continue enjoying life and travel for as long as possible:

‘I hope to continue to travel until I am close to 100 years! ... I will do it until I am in a wheelchair. I make demands on myself regardless of my age’ (A, 85).

‘I want to live and travel until I’m 100 years old, have good health and contradict the stereotypes of ageism. ...There is a quote that goes like this: “I promise that I will never die, that I will never slow down, and that I will have more fun than ever”. Those are definitely some of my aspirations with regard to life and travel’ (M2, 49).

‘Well, I’m 49. Hey – the way I look at it, I’m only halfway through my life. Why do I want to cut it off because it’s my 50th this year? Wow! I’m gonna look forward to it. To me, it’s almost like a new start’ (D, 49).

‘Age was nothing. Age doesn’t seem to make the difference. I looked at a lot of older people and I thought, well I probably could move a lot faster than them’ (P, 64).

For the women travellers who participated in this study, difficulties were taken in one’s stride, viewed as opportunities and challenges rather than as negative setbacks. For example, being unable to find suitable travel companions did not deter those who initially wanted to travel with others. Instead of waiting to find the ‘right’ travel partner, women made the choice to go alone:

‘Don’t wait around to do it with a companion’ (C, 62).

‘I thought, I really want to go travelling, and there was just nobody to go travelling with – either they had money and you didn’t want to travel with them, or they had no money and you’d like to travel with them ... it just never suited to find the right person to go with, so it took me a long time to get up the courage to decide to do it, and I ended up going on my own. ... If you want to go, and you’ve got it in your head that you want to go to this place and you can’t find anyone to go with, you’ve got to make a choice – forget to go, or start to think about doing it by yourself’ (L, 44).

‘If there’s somewhere I want to go to, and I can’t find anyone to go with, then I would go on my own’ (A, 52).
CHAPTER 5: Results (Negotiation)

‘I would always feel a lot safer travelling with a friend - but that wouldn’t stop me though’ (A, 49).

Even for those women who were in secure relationships, husbands and partners did not always share their desire for travel. Rather than let this constrain them, these women decided to travel alone even if it was not initially their preference:

‘If my partner was keen to go - I’d love him to go - but he’s not interested at all in that and so as a result of that I choose to go on my own’ (S, 45).

‘I was determined I was going to go to Egypt before I got too old and my husband wouldn’t come with me, so I said, “well if you don’t want to go, I’m going, and that’s it”’ (A, mid 50s).

‘If your partner’s not interested then you have to go and do it by yourself … it forces you to’ (M, 38).

Two other women spoke of planning their first overseas trip with a friend, only to find that their companions deserted at the last minute. Despite these unplanned setbacks, the women relied a positive and determined mindset which ensured access to travel:

‘I originally was going to meet a friend there in Spain. ... I felt let down when she took off ... but I was also prepared entirely for the fact that I might be there on my own - because I do everything on my own. It was just a matter of kicking in that same sense of doing it on my own’ (S, 42).

‘I’d worked so hard to save the money, and I was just so looking forward to travelling in India, and my friend decided not to go and just gave up like that. ... I was sort of worried for a couple of days, just thinking, “oh God, should I go?”. But then I was like, well, what does it matter? I can do it alone’ (J, 27).

For one younger solo female traveller, a new and promising relationship did not deter her desire to travel overseas, such was her determination to go to South America:

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‘I was actually involved with someone before I left and that felt really hard, but I had already planned this trip, and wanted to go on this trip, and was going to do this trip even though I’d met someone who I thought was really nice’ (R, 30).

While such excerpts show a positive approach to life and constraint, it should not be assumed that these women’s lives were entirely easy or free from pain, trauma and challenge. Rather, their stories generally reveal that if these women were not satisfied, they actively and consciously tried to change their outlook and attitude. While ‘being happy’ may be an unconscious and innate part of some women’s personalities, many worked hard to stay positive, to surround themselves with positive people and to not let setbacks and disappointments stop them from living and enjoying life to the full.

5.2.2 Self-Focus

The women also negotiated access to travel by ‘self-focusing’, or by putting their needs and their desires for travel as important in the context of their everyday lives. For example, one woman found that her five children were somewhat ‘resentful’ that she was leaving them for a month to travel solo to Ecuador. In answer to this, however, she explained to them the importance of following one’s dreams and focussing on the self: ‘I’ve always said to them, look, follow your dream, as long as it doesn’t upset other people and isn’t too inconvenient, follow your dream. And I suppose in a way I had to go and do it to prove it’ (P, 54).

For other women, significant life events such as the breakdown of relationships, the death of parents or the departure of grown children, many women found that significant gaps emerged in their lives which had not previously existed. These gaps allowed for a newfound emphasis on self, where they found themselves pondering and reassessing their lives, goals and desires. As part of this reassessment, women focussed in on themselves by recognising their own needs and wants, which included the desire for overseas travel.
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Grown children leaving the home for the first time provided the impetus for several single mothers to ‘self-focus’ and to re-engage with their travel desires and motivations. Freed from their primary role as carer, and satisfied that their children would be safe and happy on their own, these women made the decision to travel. Travelling was viewed as a way of putting themselves as priorities, after many years of putting their children first:

‘The children grew up. So mother is now by herself. So, I’m driving to work one day, I’ve got three homes and I thought, what am I doing? I’m gonna to go into that travel agent and book a trip’ (P, 64).

‘It took me five years after they [children] left home to work out what kind of life I was gonna have ... that trip kind of happened in the middle of all of that sorting out - just putting myself out there and doing something different because I couldn’t think of anything to do once the kids had left home. You know, it’s like all of a sudden after twenty years you can do anything in the world that you want to do – you’ve got your health, you’ve got your brain, you’ve got all the money that you want, and what do you do? ... You've got total choice’ (S, 42).

‘After the challenge of raising my children ... this was the time to really make a decision about my life ... and I decided that I wanted something for myself. So I decided either I was going to go and study, which I was really scared about doing, or I was going to travel, so I sold everything and I travelled. ... I was thinking, what about me? ... I thought, I just want to see the world, so I bought a ticket to Indonesia’ (M2, 49).

‘Women have almost had the breakthrough of, I have to live for myself as well as for the family. And that’s coming slowly, I think – “okay, what’s good for me?” ’ (C, 62).

For one woman whose youngest daughter had finally left for university, the desire to travel and to have some time for herself was so strong that it did not matter where she went, only that she went:

‘The next phase was when the kids had all finished university. I’d seen them all into uni safely. ... I rang up the airlines and I said, I want to go to Africa and they said, “oh we haven’t got a flight then, we've only got one flight a week to Africa” and I said, “well I’ve got to leave Australia on that day”, ’cause that was my promise to myself. That
was my goal that kept me going all those years – that I would leave the day after I got my youngest daughter to uni … The next country on her list was Argentina, so I said “I’ll go there”’ (D, 57).

For two women whose marriages had dissolved, the traumatic separation from partners also provided a newfound avenue for self-focus and for reassessment of life goals. These women felt that travel would be one of the best opportunities to ‘find themselves’ again:

’When we divorced, I pawned off my wedding ring, and bought a backpack ... once the relationship ended, that was devastating. I didn’t want it to end, but it was ending - so it was really time to focus in on me, which was the travel’ (J, 38).

’The marriage that I made the second time ... it didn’t take me very long to realise that it was really going to be a terrible mistake on my part, so I think I sort of lost myself there for a little while. ... I think one of the things I had to do after that was to find myself again, give myself back what I felt I had lost ... I suppose I’d been an independent person struggling in there somewhere dying to get out again, so then pursuing the things that I felt were important to me, and not constantly putting them on the backburner - travelling to the places I wanted to go to’ (A, 58).

5.2.3 Prioritise

All of the women interviewed for this study led full and busy lives. Yet while the women’s commitments relating to work, study, family and leisure were time consuming, they found ways to negotiate time and space in their lives to access opportunities for solo travel. Linked with positive determination and self-focus, many women spoke about having to ‘prioritise for travel’. This strategy meant that if the women wanted to travel, they needed to make the effort to free up the time and space for travel.

As an example of this prioritisation, some women worked overtime for lengthy periods as a deliberate and focussed way to save money for travel:
‘I was determined to go away. … I worked a couple of jobs. I had a night job two nights a week and a full time job, to save money’ (K, 31).

‘It took me fourteen months. Basically I was working seven days a week to save the money, and I saved $20 000 in fourteen months. I was so focussed. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, that was going to stop me – it was just this momentum, this going, going and going’ (J, 38).

Some women also intentionally pursued jobs that would allow the flexibility and time needed for overseas travel:

‘It was my company - it actually allowed these sabbaticals and these types of travel, which I thought was brilliant. I know not many other companies in Australia will allow me to do that, but I don’t know many other people who actually took advantage of it’ (S, 32).

‘I took leave without pay, and I fortunately had a boss who was willing to let me do that … If I hadn’t been able to get the time off for the long trip, then I guess I would have organised my life so that I’d actually leave that job and take the trip’ (C, 45).

‘Because I’m self-employed, I can travel. ... Like I sort of do a big job and I’ll get enough money together and off I’ll go’ (M, 38).

When travel was placed as a top priority, the women chose and accepted different lifestyles. Leaving secure jobs and businesses, altering lifestyles, selling or renting out houses and giving up material possessions were de rigeur for many of the solo women travellers interviewed. Such actions ensured that the women could allocate the time, space and money for trips away. Many of the women chose to eschew their financial and material security as a means of prioritising for travel. While seen as a risky decision, it was viewed as the only way to get out of the ‘comfort zone’ which many women described as a potential limiting factor:

‘It was having the guts to give up a well-paid job and travel the world alone. ... I’m scared as anything of what I’m doing ... I don’t know from one week to the next how I’m going to pay my bills, and for me, a structured accountant who’s used to having as much money as I ever would want – it’s a whole new way of thinking’ (D, 49).
‘I sold my practice - I took a year off. It was very hard because it was like, well, should I focus on my career right now, work really hard for the next fifteen to twenty years and then go and do what I want to do? Or do I do it now, you know? So I took the opportunity and I did it now’ (A, 45).

‘I decided I was going to change my lifestyle completely so I resigned, and got a one way ticket to Singapore, with a backpack, and I said I'd be back in three weeks, three months, three years’ (D, 57).

‘I gave up my job, which meant my superannuation ... and I sold my car, and I rented out my house ... and I travelled alone’ (J, 38).

A twenty-year old participant discussed her deliberate decision to resist entering into a full-time mode of work. For her, a career equalled the ultimate constraint, limiting her freedom to travel at a whim during her youth:

‘I always think, must go and do it now – and everyone's like, “chill out girl, you're only 20”. ... But my worst fear in my life is to be stuck in a place doing the same job and wake up one morning and go, “oh my God, I'm 40 and I've done this job for 20 years”. Seeing the same people every day and doing the same thing, 52 weeks in a year for twenty-odd years. I will just die if that ever happens, which it won't because I won't let it’ (S, 20).

Along with an acceptance of a less-secure lifestyle, many women’s pragmatic philosophy towards money helped to forge a path which allowed for travel. Such an attitude allowed women to take risks and reduce the amount of time spent at work:

‘I'm never really insecure about unemployment, since my decision last week [to quit job]. ... Snipped the financial lifeline. I want to work from the heart. I want to do things that are inspiring both for me and the people I'm working for – things that actually serve the planet’ (S, 42).

‘I only work four days a week now, so I have got more time because I feel that it's not as important to make money as it is to live and so it’s nice to be able to now think, well bugger the money. I'm gonna have more life and travel than just work’ (L, 44).
While it was recognised that money enabled travel, the women made a point of downplaying its importance in achieving happiness and security. Based on this philosophy, a lack of money was not viewed as a negative limitation, but a result of having less work which freed up more time for travel:

‘I don’t have a lot of material possessions and assets, but I’m quite happy’ (M, 38).

‘You don’t need a lot of money to survive. Money is important, but it’s not that important. It’s not the be all and end all of existence. ... The pursuit for happiness will not come from the pursuit for money’ (D, 49).

‘I don’t have really any classic things to my name now in terms of monetary value ... because I want to spend my money on travelling’ (J, 31).

‘Money doesn’t mean anything, like I’ve had no money for quite a long time, and I really thrive off it. The less money I’ve got the better it is; the easier it is to just go’ (N, 20).

5.2.4 Embrace Fear

As noted in the previous chapter, fear and self-doubt were dominant constraints on the women’s pre-travel choices and opportunities. This fear stemmed from the women’s own internal doubts and trepidations about their solo travel capabilities, as well as from the socio-cultural context which constructed solo female travel as inappropriate and vulnerable to male attack. Yet when speaking with many of the women, a clear narrative emerged in which they refused to let fear dictate their lives and stop them from travelling.

Relying on a positive and pragmatic outlook on life, these women ‘embraced the fear’, rather than act as victims of it. This strategy was linked to a general view that all women must find ways to deal with fear, because ‘it exists as an energy that all women have to deal with’ (S, 42). Other women spoke of the conscious efforts and coping mechanisms they used to manage their fears. One woman put her fear in perspective by emphasising its random nature, while another chose to see fear as ‘irrational’:
‘I do my best not to allow fear to get a grip, but I’m still dealing with it by, by finding different ways of dealing with it ... It’s not that I’m fear free, it’s just that I channel it into what I hope is a positive way. ... I guess I make a point of not being frightened ‘cause I think our world is a really great world and random acts of violence exist, but I’ve got just as good a chance of winning Lotto. You know, it happens but you’re not gonna walk around your whole life waiting for it to happen. I’m certainly not gonna walk around being frightened’ (S, 42).

‘Fear is irrational so it was just a matter of not having it there’ (N, 20).

Another woman utilised strategies she had learned through counselling to deal with what had been a lifetime of fear. These coping mechanisms enabled her to confront her fears of being on her own and led to her ability to access her first overseas solo trip to India at the age of 60:

‘All my fear started to turn around when I discovered the definition of fear: fear is “False Evidence Appearing Real”! Something for me to really look at each time this feeling came upon me. ... So from then on, with many other techniques and help, I realised I could change all this around. ... At age 60 I spent six months in India on my own’ (E, 62).

Other women made a conscious choice to resist the fear that others’ tried to place on them:

‘People say, “what if you got lost, aren’t you fearful?”. What’s it matter if you got lost, because you’re going to a place that you don’t even know ... fear is the biggest stopper of everything in your life. If you overcome your fear, you can do anything, and there's heaps of things to do out there’ (P, 64).

Several women showed a strong desire to leave the ‘comfort zone’, and to do so meant embracing the risks, fears and life changes that were inherent in making the choice to travel alone:

‘Life is change! Change is good for everybody. Comfort zones are not very good’ (P, 64).

‘Most people stop at the fear, they think, “oh, I’m scared” or, “I better not do that ‘cause I’m scared”. Well, yeah, you’re scared because you’re taking a risk. But if you
don’t take a risk you never do anything. ... You’ve got to risk comfort if you want to change ... to me it’s a calculated risk; it’s a risk I’m prepared to take’ (D, 49).

‘I felt that it was still something that I really wanted to do, even though I felt like it was going to be a huge challenge for me. ... Like, there’s that sense of, well, partially this is taking a risk and that’s what I want to do, and it’s about challenging myself to be able to step outside my comfort zone’ (R, 30).

As other women noted, the fear of going alone had to be overcome if one was to grow, achieve and experience. Rather than hide behind their fear, the women embraced it so that they could travel:

‘I’d rather go and do things than sit at home wondering what it might be like’ (A, 52).

‘Fear is natural - you’re going to feel frightened, and I accept that. Courage means fear plus action. So I feel that I had the courage to do my trip, that was the action, and I was afraid, and I’m still afraid, but I’m not gonna let this fear stop me doing it’ (D, 49).

An assumption which helped many women deal with their fear was that attack could occur just as easily when travelling overseas alone as it might at home. While there was an acceptance and awareness of the risks inherent in solo travel for women, their fear of attack was kept in check as they recognised that ‘it could happen anywhere’, including at home:

‘If it’s going to happen to you, it doesn't really matter where you are, you know. ... I mean you wouldn't go into certain neighbourhoods [here] if you were alone. You just don't do that, you know. So why would you do it any place else?’ (T, 55).

‘I mean, in Turkey, you gotta be careful sometimes in the bazaar, just keep your wits about you and your money, you’ve got to be aware of pickpockets, but then you have to do that in Sydney as well. So that’s nothing’ (A, 52).

‘So many middle-aged women would say to me, “oh, you’re so brave”. So many women would say, “oh I went to Bangkok with my husband because he had to go for a conference and I didn’t go outside the hotel”. ... I used to nearly cry at lost opportunities with people who have never had to do it on their own so they wouldn’t do it. Tell your husband to give you a map! ... They’re all envying me and my freedom
and so on, but why wait? I mean, if you can go to a supermarket, in a city in Australia on your own ... why can’t you do it in another city?’ (C, 62).

5.2.5 Plan and Prepare

Planning and preparing was another negotiation strategy used to deal with the women’s reported precedent constraints. By reading about the country and culture they would be visiting, learning basic language skills and seeking out local knowledge from guidebooks, the women were able to increase their mental confidence and seek access to travel.

Planning and advanced organisation were seen to be important aspects of staying aware and safe during the solo travel experience. This was especially the case for those women travelling alone to destinations for the first time:

‘In retrospect, I would have mentally given myself more mental preparation time to have felt really prepared before I left. ... I think the trip planning is as much a part of the process as actually travelling yourself, by giving yourself that preparedness’ (R, 30).

‘Most of all I read - definitely. First of all, I read about the country in the Lonely Planet. ... They’ve got a great section in there on women travellers and what to look out for ... I was really aware of that’ (J, 38).

Strategies such as being culturally informed about a country (particularly their attitude to solo women travellers) made the women feel more confident and lessened feelings of vulnerability and fear of attack:

‘Do your homework, know why you want to go this place ... find out a little bit about it before you go, you know, what’s the religion, what’s the language, what do people wear, what’s suitable for Westerners’ behaviour and dress? And then go from there, and as I say, once you’ve got that pattern then I don’t see the reason for fear’ (C, 62).
‘Definitely do it, but be aware of the dangers and do as much research on the country in which you’re going to be travelling, as possible, before you go, and that can lessen your vulnerability to attack’ (J, 55).

‘It’s that sort of preparation, you know, advanced organisation - it makes you just much less vulnerable’ (C, 45).

Many women took pains to research the destinations they would be visiting, in an attempt to understand their social mores, cultural norms and languages. This was not only done to inform themselves personally, but also as an attempt to remain socially and culturally educated and aware, so as to not offend others while travelling:

‘The attitude that you have in a country is very, very important and that’s why I researched it [Ecuador] really well’ (P, 54).

‘I used to try and learn the basics of each language of each country ... when I went into Mexico I took a week’s course in Spanish, just to try and help me get through that as well’ (J, 38).

5.3 Withdraw

In contrast to access forms of negotiation, some women responded to constraint by negotiating away from solo travel. Subsequently, a second negotiation response that many women had to their precedent constraints was to ‘withdraw’ from solo travel. Methods of withdrawal were to postpone solo travel, to decide to share travel with others or, to a lesser degree, to discontinue solo travel altogether. These withdrawal strategies reflect the women’s decisions to reduce their engagement with solo travel at different times in their lives. For these women, such techniques were not viewed as a failure to succeed, but more as another option to cater to changing aspects of their lives and relationships. Furthermore, ‘withdrawal’ did not always mean that women were entirely finished with their travel. Rather, they may have needed to ‘opt out’ for a period to regroup and reconsider their relationships, life commitments and motivations.
Solo travel was viewed as an opportunity cost of sorts. Organising for travel meant a great deal of time needed to be invested in saving money, altering schedules and shifting around priorities. To be able to travel solo overseas, other opportunities had to be foregone, and for some women this was not always a viable choice.

5.3.1 Postpone

Rather than see themselves as entirely finished with their solo travels as a result of constraint, several women chose to think that they were merely ‘postponing’ travel until a future date when life circumstances would be more amenable. In this way, they were only withdrawing temporarily from travel. By thinking in this positive way, these women were able to keep their travel dreams alive by anticipating future solo travel or by relying on memories of previous travel.

Though at times regretting their lack of access many of the women found acceptance of their circumstances by reminiscing on their experiences of the past. Accepting the current financial constraints related to buying houses two women found they no longer had the time or the resources to travel alone. As a response to this, they consoled themselves by acknowledging the satisfaction of their previous travels and by anticipating future travel:

‘We’re settling down and buying a house and things change – your priorities are different ... I sort of had to get to the point where I had to say, well I’ve done a fair good lot of travelling and I sort of have to come back to reality and now I just think that I can always go again later’ (W, 23).

‘In 1995, I bought a three bedroom house on my own – that’s put any travel plans on hold for a very long time. ... I will have to leave my backpack in the cupboard until there is an increase in the value of the dollar. I only hope that it is sooner rather than later’ (P, 42).
Withdrawing from solo travel by postponing also allowed two other women a space to save money for their next trips. While financial constraints were acknowledged, plans for future travel were always kept in mind:

‘I just wish I had more money to do more, you know ... it's a little bit hard at the moment – I'm just trying to save my pennies up and do something. ... I'd love to do more ... I will do some more travel. I really will get round to it – it's just getting my life sorted out a little bit more at the moment. Getting a few funds under the belt. ... I’ll have a little bit more money up my sleeve and I can maybe get away and do some of these wonderful things’ (A, mid 50s).

‘I’m planning to go away next year – well finances are pretty difficult being a student now, but I’m saving to go away next year to Kenya on a volunteer program’ (H, 19).

Two single women postponed their solo travel plans so they could save to buy homes, yet future travels were always anticipated. Part of the reason for securing houses was so that these women could have a secure base to return to after travelling away from home. In essence, having a secure home base enabled the women to feel comfortable in seeking access to travel:

‘In order to do and fulfil what I want to do and travel and then come back and use Australia as a base, I actually feel like I need to buy a home, so I can go to South America for three months, come back for a month, go to Africa for six months, come back for a couple of months, you know, and actually move around a bit like that ... have a base here’ (J, 31).

‘I’m working to be secure in my home country so that when I do travel again, I have a ‘known’ familiar home to return to. ... If I can get out of the poverty trap, you know, and I can get something that I can pay off the mortgage – and I could leave it and then go again’ (M2, 49).

As demonstrated in the previous constraints chapter, expectation of primary care for others could constrain the women’s ability to travel, as well as hinder the length of trip. Single, childless and in her mid-forties, one woman chose to withdraw from travel for a time so that she could care for her elderly mother:
'I prefer long-term trips so one can give oneself over to the travel experience – but other commitments often make this difficult. ... I am fairly committed to Sydney [her home town] for the time being, as Mum is elderly and needing more support, and my brothers and sisters all live in or close to Sydney. For the moment it’s a high priority to take the time for these relationships, so I don’t see myself doing major travel for a while’ (C, 45).

5.3.2 Share Travel

In contrast to the women who chose to postpone, a number of other women decided that they would no longer seek access to solo travel. Instead, these women accepted the finality of their solo travel, in exchange for sharing future travel with their partners, husbands or family. In this way, these women were not neglecting travel altogether, but the process of going alone was no longer desired.

A number of women spoke of wanting to share the joys of future travel with their partners:

’Next time, I’d probably like to go with my partner’ (M, 38).

’The potential for romance doesn’t interest me now I’ve met [my husband]. ... I still want adventure ... but I plan to integrate it more with work/normal life/marriage. ... I want to explore more with [my husband] and have experiences that will add to our life together. ... So I think I will have to adapt more to his style of travel. I like being with him and I want to share those experiences with him’ (D, 40).

’Now that I’ve found someone who is a partner, I want to do it together, rather than by myself. ... I was worried because I’d been travelling on my own so much and quite selfish in what I wanna do, I think. ... But we do it really well, actually. ... We actually get along really well, and we’re very similar and we don’t have a lot of conflicting problems as to where we want to go and what we want to do, because it interests both of us - we have similar interests’ (M, 31).

Withdrawal from solo travel could also result from a general weariness of the solitude and loneliness of going alone:
'My solo travel was during my time of solitude and that time is over. I would like to share travel in the future with someone else’ (A, 52).

'I think probably next trip I’ll go with someone else, ‘cause it is quite confronting all the time … it starts to get a bit wearing’ (M, 38).

'I don’t really feel like travelling on my own in the future. … I guess I’ve had the best times when I’ve met people and the worst on my own. I’m not prepared to have those lows’ (D, 40).

**5.3.3 Discontinue**

There were some women who did not speak of postponing, anticipating or sharing future travel. These women had decided to withdraw by discontinuing their travels altogether, whether solo or not. It must be noted, however, that this was their particular viewpoint at a snapshot in time. It is recognised that in the women’s lives, attitudes and motivations would continue to change over time, and that travel may resurge as a focus later on in life.

For two women, the decision to discontinue was due to dissatisfaction with previous solo trips. In these cases, solo travel had not satisfied their expectations of what it might be, and feelings of boredom and loneliness led them to question the need to travel any further:

'It sounds like a childish thing to say: “I’m bored!”’. But that’s exactly how I felt, and that’s exactly how I feel now. I kept thinking of what I could be doing back home, instead of backpacking and seeing another group of faces I don’t know, and another place of people doing exactly the sort of things I do at home, in a different way, with a lot less money’ (J, 43).

‘Travelling in Spain was just a struggle towards the end, to keep doing it – to keep thinking of things to do. … It was lonely … it was a challenge in the sense that it was boring. I was so over this lonely space. What I’m more interested in now is doing things here, like surfing’ (S, 40).
Another younger woman no longer felt compelled to travel, but for different reasons. Satisfied with the amount of travel she had done in her early twenties, she was committed to making a life at home in Australia: ‘Presently I have no major travel plans. Have had a full-time job for over a year now and am trying to enjoy my life here [at home]. ... I’m trying to settle down for a while. Get a job, settle down, try to get my boyfriend out here on a permanent basis’ (K, 31). An older woman had similar views, finding that her motivations for travel had waned somewhat: ‘I don’t sort of feel sad that I’ve come to the end of my travel, and I think I possibly have. But I’ve come to the end of reasons for travel, you know?’ (C, 62).

5.4 Continue

The final negotiation response, ‘continue’, describes how the solo women travellers responded to their in-situ (or during-travel) constraints, such as unwanted attention, loneliness and feelings of vulnerability. To be able to continue their solo journeys and enjoy the benefits of travel, the women utilised a number of strategies to confront these constraints. Five key negotiation strategies were utilised as part of this ‘continue’ response, namely respect and adapt; modify dress and behaviour; self-protect; join others and exit.

5.4.1 Respect and Adapt

A key negotiation strategy used by the women during their solo travels was to adapt to and respect the cultural mores of the destinations through which they journeyed. With a strong desire to see and experience how other people lived, almost all of the women in this study believed that adapting at some level to the culture they were visiting was respectful, sensitive and chiefly their responsibility. As one woman succinctly summed up: ‘I have to adjust to their culture, not them adjust to me’ (A, 45).
This type of response was typical of the women’s attitudes towards the people and cultures of the destinations they were visiting. Viewing themselves as ‘guests’ in another’s country, many women made conscious and deliberate efforts to be informed about, and aware of, the cultural and societal norms of the countries they visited. According to one woman, part of respecting another culture and way of life was trying to accept what one heard and saw, without passing judgment:

‘I travel with an open mind. I accept what I see – no matter what – even though it may seem a bit bizarre. I accept people the way they are. I respect all people and the land and government of wherever I go, even if I do not agree with their laws and regulations and ideals. I do not judge or criticise - or at least try not to’ (P, 42).

Another woman utilised a positive outlook on life and people to explain how she was able to adapt to the challenges and constraints of solo travel: ‘To travel, one must claim to be patient, resourceful, robust … a love of life and people and the wonder of adventure. … You must keep a sense of humour’ (P, 64). Respecting and adapting to foreign cultures was not just a strategy that emerged during travel, but was part of a genuine desire on the part of the women to understand people and to empathise with others. This ability to adapt helped ease some of the women’s travel difficulties and improved relationships between them and the local people:

‘I think if you give, you get so much more back. … And I had no problems wherever I went in Ecuador, because it's very family oriented and I'll treat them as courteously as I would any other family. … I ask if there's anything I can do to help. I always found that was a very good opener: “would you like help with the evening meal?”’. Even if it was just carrying something through to the table, they were extremely appreciative of that’ (P, 54).

‘I find generally if you treat people as people - they're interesting beings - and if you chat to them, there's no trouble. If you're genuinely interested in that person, they seem to sense it. They're not threatened - because I am so interested in these people, because they’ve got so much that you can learn’ (D, 57).

Linked with their pre-travel planning and preparation, learning elements of the local language and using this during travel was seen as respectful to the culture
and its people. At the same time, knowing even a little of the local vernacular helped to ease the potential difficulties of arrival in a new place:

‘Trying to speak French helped a lot. ... People would be so warm and friendly once they realised that my bad French was not a result of being English, but that I came from the other side of the world, from this exotic, wonderful country called Australia, you know’ (C, 45).

‘I learnt a fair amount of Nepali when I was there ... gradually learning the language and understanding more and more of the conversation would just blossom the relationship more and more as they realised how intent you are to understand their language’ (N, 20).

‘I can speak bits of French. And I’m pretty good, I pick up languages really quickly so it was quite, it was an easy transition, I suppose’ (M, 31).

Ever aware of themselves as Western solo females and of the potential impact of their difference, many of the women made efforts to adapt to the local culture. One tall, blonde woman noted that she ‘often stands out in colouring and in height in the places I am attracted to, so I try and remain sensitive to the culture of the people and place’ (J, 31). Others were consistently mindful of their socio-economic status, particularly when travelling in the less-developed countries: ‘You have to be aware that any foreign woman travelling to the sort of countries that I've been in is seen as an easy target and is automatically classified as being wealthy. No matter how frugally we travel, obviously our socio-economic condition is going to be different from the locals’ (J, 55).

Many women, regardless of their age, were queried about their solo status during their travels. ‘Where is your husband?’ and ‘where are your children?’ were common questions asked of them by local people, men and women alike. While such questions were no doubt reflective of normal human curiosity, several women reported that they felt uncomfortable as locals regarded them as ‘different’, ‘unusual’, ‘weird’, or ‘crazy’ for travelling on their own without their partners and for being away from their children:
‘They were always surprised that I was a grey-haired, 60 year old lady travelling around by myself with no family’ (E, 62).

‘They [local women in Indonesia] always asked how old I was and just couldn’t understand why I wasn’t married and had babies’ (P, 42).

‘It was really quite foreign to some people, to think that you weren’t choosing to be married and having kids’ (R, 30).

As shown through these types of statements, there was a need for the women to be constantly aware of their difference as Westerners and as solo, unattached females. Wishing to remain sensitive to the local culture mores relating to their sex, the single women in this study often avoided telling the truth when asked by locals where their husband and children were. To deflect attention, a common ploy for the single women was to invent an imaginary husband or partner. Such strategies were seen to minimise cultural difference and the women’s impact on others:

‘[In Indonesia] I would say I’m with somebody, because it’s just a very foreign concept to them’ (M2, 49).

‘The women will say to you, “where is your husband? where are your children? how many children do you have?” And usually I lie. ... I remember getting involved in one big fib and I said he was sick and they said I still shouldn’t be out on my own’ (D, 40).

‘Sometimes I just said I didn’t have a husband, or I’d say my husband’s at home, because it was easier’ (M, 38).

‘I started off rather naively, and told them the truth. They couldn’t really cope with the fact that I was divorced, so in the end I told them that he’d died, and that I was a widow and I was out there doing it on my own. ... And in a sense I think it was almost respectful to their culture, because they couldn’t cope with the fact that I was divorced – that was a no-no. But the fact that my husband had died was something that they could accept’ (J, 38).

In addition to fabricating stories about fictitious or deceased husbands, another woman chose to lie about having a religion to help ease the difference: ‘You have to say that you’ve got some sort of religion because they just find it all very different’ (M, 49).
As shown in Chapter 4, a dominant constraining feature of the women’s travel was the experience of unwanted male attention and harassment. As another example of respecting and adapting to the local culture or dominant religion, many women negotiated by remaining cognisant of the reasons behind the male ‘gaze’. Again, this revolved around the women’s awareness of their difference as female forms in countries where a woman on her own was not the norm:

‘I felt very conscious that my gender and the fact that I was female was provoking a strong response’ (C, 45).

‘I’m quite happy talking to men of whatever culture but I’m also very conscious that I need to be aware of their beliefs’ (A, 52).

‘It’s because the men have only seen women wearing very skimpy garments from the West, straight over, not even caring about the culture. ... It’s still sad that men do that, but you’ve got to realise that these guys have been brought up in a situation where the women have to cover themselves, and that’s just the way it is, that’s the way life is’ (N, 20).

‘Because you’re a foreigner and because you’re a woman, it’s very interesting for them to be able to talk to a woman, because they can’t talk to women in their own country. ... Generally the men are just really happy to be able to talk and express with a woman without being criticised’ (L, 44).

5.4.2 Modify Dress and Behaviour

Linked closely to the women’s desire to adapt to other cultures and to reduce the impact of their difference as solo female travellers, was a conscious effort to modify their dress and behaviour to fit with local cultural mores. By adopting local female dress codes and decorum, these women eased their travel paths while at the same time protecting themselves by minimising their vulnerability.

Rather than see dress requirements as restrictive, constraining or as affronts to Western feminist ideals, many chose to accept the local female attire of whichever country they were visiting:

‘Trying to wear what’s appropriate is one of the obvious things’ (C, 45).
‘I believe that if you’re in a country where women cover up, you cover up. And I don’t think it’s a big deal, you just accept it. You draw less attention to yourself - people won’t look down on you’ (K, 31).

‘In the Samoan culture … they actually would prefer women to wear certain things, so I’d do that. I mean I usually don’t like to offend anyone - I think that’s respectful’ (M, 38).

These philosophies were particularly relevant in certain societies and cultures. For women travelling alone in some Muslim countries, where it seemed appropriate that women ‘cover up’, special care was taken not to offend. Covering arms, legs, and sometimes heads and faces, women also noted feeling more comfortable as the focus of the male gaze was reduced. While travelling throughout Egypt and Morocco, three different women spoke of their deliberate attempts to cover their skin in an effort to respect local mores:

‘I consciously didn’t dress in things that showed too much of my skin, because I was aware that they have different cultural things around seeing lots of bits of female skin - tried to stay aware of all that cultural stuff’ (A, 49).

‘Most of the time I’d try to cover my shoulders and wear a pair of longer shorts. I mean, you have to accept other countries’ cultures … you can’t sort of say, well I’m Western, I’m just gonna get around in whatever I want, because they don’t see it that way’ (W, 23).

‘[In Morocco] I was not in revealing clothing, like I was really well prepared for it and had on big baggy shirts, baggy pants’ (M, 31).

In India, similar efforts were made by the women travellers to adapt to local mores of appropriate ‘femininity’ and manner of dress:

‘What I tended to do in India was see what other Indian women were wearing, and they said to wear a shawl, wear something that looked like a veil … and I had a sarong that I put over my head or around my shoulders; it just seemed appropriate to cover myself a bit more’ (A, 52).
CHAPTER 5: Results (Negotiation)

‘One thing I was always careful about in India was covering my shoulders, and dressing as women do ... and it’s actually the easiest way to get by. If you dress as they did you get far less problems’ (N, 20).

For these culturally sensitive women, other female travellers’ refusal to do the same was a cause of frustration. There was a common feeling across the women interviewed that Western female tourists should ‘blend in’ rather than stand out. Furthermore, there was a view held that female tourists were often responsible when harassment was aimed at them, because of ‘culturally inappropriate’ dress and behaviour:

‘Sometimes I look at tourists and think, why don’t you put up a sign saying, “rob me”, or something, because it just looks really obvious. You can walk around like a woman who happens to be an office worker ... that’s sort of the way I do things - you just look like a normal person, going about their business. ... So I think that’s part of it – looking like you belong. Not pulling out a map, you know, unless you really can’t help it’ (C, 45).

‘A lot of the women I met who had had problems were acting as though they’d never really left England or Australia’ (N, 20).

‘I saw a girl wearing a bikini top and shorts to a market in Bangkok. I felt like going up and saying to her, “would you please put some clothes on, because you are giving Western women a bad name”. You don’t have to wear national costume, all I’m saying is, in Thailand, wear a t-shirt instead of a singlet top, that’s all it is. ... It’s not setting feminism back twenty years by doing that’ (K, 31).

In addition to modifying their dress and appearance, several women spoke of monitoring their actions and movements as learned strategies for deflecting unwanted male attention. Local women’s behaviour often provided the benchmark for what was acceptable ‘feminine’ behaviour:

‘I sort of felt that’s what I had to do – just put on this blank face’ (J, 43).

‘I probably learned not to be superficially very friendly or very warm or smile at men. ... In Italy, I realised that if I smiled at a man when you say “good morning” or “good evening”, well in fact, in some cases if you even respond with a “good morning” or
“good evening”, that person’s going to follow you for the rest of the time you’re in that town, assuming that you’ve actually said, “yes, sure I’ll sleep with you”! ’ (C, 45).

‘Sometimes [men] would be aggressive. I would ignore them. I just would not even respond, I would keep my eyes cast down to the ground. I did not have any eye contact with them and I would just ignore it’ (A, 45).

‘I think if you learn not to make eye contact and you just sort of look like you know what you’re doing’ (P, 64).

### 5.4.3 Self-Protect

A third negotiation strategy was for the solo women travellers to use a range of mechanisms to protect themselves from potential harm. As noted in the previous chapter on constraints, there was a general perception by the women that females travelling alone were perhaps more highly prone to incidents of danger, harassment and attack. While consciously avoiding resorting to an overly paranoid or fearful attitude, safety and self-protection were nonetheless key priorities.

All of the women interviewed in this study described techniques they used to keep themselves safe and protected. Some of these coping mechanisms were planned and conscious, while others emerged as a result of the situation at hand. For example, several women spoke of protecting themselves by relying on intuition, gut feelings and common sense when travelling in what were perceived to be unsafe tourist environments:

‘I use my intuition and common sense ... I think it’s being streetwise’ (S, 40).

‘Common sense prevails a lot of the time’ (A, mid 50s).

‘You develop a sixth sense for tricky situations, too - your antennas go up and you can just sense if a place is dangerous or not and then assess if you want to stay there and risk it or go. ... You just learn to listen to it – that sort of message that the hairs on the back of your neck tell you. And I think if you do that you can travel anywhere safely’ (D, 57).
‘One of the things that I do, and it sounds really hippie-trippy, but I always lock up my energy in some kind of - some people might call it a spell, other people might call it a prayer, or whatever - but I’m perpetually putting fake shields around myself. ... My senses were alert all the time. So I was always, in an energy way, keeping myself safe, all the time, but subconsciously. You know, lack of safety was not in my conscious mind because I wanted to enjoy’ (S, 42).

Another woman told of feeling that some immaterial force or power watched over her, protecting her while she travelled alone: ‘I really do think somebody looks after me when I’m wandering around on my own’ (A, mid 50s). Whichever country they were in, however, many solo women travellers perceived that they needed to be on guard and continually aware:

‘I’m always on my guard and always aware’ (J, 27).

‘There are constant challenges and one has to keep one’s wits about oneself constantly’ (A, 85).

‘I tend to be cautious and careful; I rarely take uncalculated risks. I usually have backup plans’ (A, 52).

‘You have to be on your toes the whole time. Just be aware’ (J, 55).

‘I’m really careful – I really play it safe in a lot of ways’ (A, 25).

To self-protect from unwanted male attention, one woman travelling through Ecuador found that wearing a wedding ring reduced the amount of attention. She also described how having a photo of her husband and family on hand reduced others’ disapproval of her solo status:

‘They’re a very family oriented people and I had a photograph of my family ... that actually was more powerful, I think, than anything else and that was more the strategy I used to keep safe’ (P, 58).

Some women realised that making the most of physical features such as height and size were effective strategies for reducing harm or potential acts of crime:
CHAPTER 5: Results (Negotiation)

‘Some of the countries I’ve been, particularly like China and Mexico and Vietnam, it was the height advantage. I feel quite safe because I’m taller than the majority of the population ... that gives you just the body language that you hope is not making you threatening looking but making them think twice about approaching you’ (S, 32).

‘I often think it’s because I’m big. And I’m so much bigger than most of the people you encounter and even when I’ve been in places where people have told me bad stories. You know, like Vietnam was very poor and there was lots of street crime – no-one ever came near me and I just figure that it’s because I’m big - they’re scared of me or something’ (D, 40).

As noted in the section on ‘adapt’ strategies, many women often resorted to fabricating stories about having a husband as a means of showing respect and for lessening the impact of their difference. Similar coping mechanisms also proved to be useful for self-protection from unwanted male attention and harassment:

‘I told the men I had a sick husband back at the hotel and had to go off to the hotel. So you learn all those little ploys’ (A, mid 50s).

‘If it was a guy that was obviously sussing me out, I’d say, “oh I’m just passing through on my way to meet my husband”, which was a total lie of course, but great protection because I found they were very respectful of the sanctity of marriage. So that was a common ploy’ (D, 57).

‘In Ecuador, I just said, “Señor, I’m a missionary”. And that just got me out of so much trouble. Those were some of the strategies that I used to cope with that’ (P, 54).

Finally, some women further self-protected by being conscious about their health, keeping their bodies fit and watching what they ate and drank while travelling alone. It was generally seen that to stay safe and aware of their surroundings, one must remain alert, healthy and able:

‘I’m pretty meticulous and fussy when I travel alone - I’m always very careful with water and food. ... I just like to stay safe’ (A, 58).
‘I think the important thing is you have to know who you are and what you're capable of and what you're not capable of. You have to stay safe and you have to stay healthy’ (J, 45).

‘In India ... you have to be very, very careful what you eat and you have to be careful with water. You can't even clean your teeth - you've gotta just never do anything with their water or otherwise you'll become sick ... and that can reduce your enjoyment and make you feel vulnerable’ (P, 64).

5.4.4 Join Others

Another strategy which assisted women in negotiating their in-situ constraints was to link up with others. At different times throughout their journeys, the women joined other travellers, tour groups or locals. This was a strategy which provided the solo women travellers with an opportunity for social interaction, at the same time easing constraints such as loneliness, fear of attack and vulnerability to harassment.

For women at the start of their travel careers, linking up with experienced travellers or friends could assuage initial nervousness related to a lack of local knowledge. After establishing a sense of confidence about their solo travel abilities, these women then felt they could carry on alone:

‘I started off a couple of weeks with some friends and then when I felt like I’d got my bearings, I went off on my own, ’cause they wanted to do different things’ (A, 52).

‘I got off the plane at ten o’ clock at night, never been in a foreign country with another language before. Luckily I was befriended by two Aussies at the airport who had been to Thailand before – took me in their taxi, put me up in their hotel room for three days, showed me how to bargain for cabs in Bangkok - and after that I went off on my own’ (D, 40).

‘I met a couple of Australian men who were by themselves and that was really great. At first I was a little bit nervous to be there and I didn't know what women can do in that society but they took me along to teahouses and restaurants and things then I
realised that there were Iranian women out in restaurants and the teahouses and so I could go there without being worried’ (A, 25).

While wanting to travel independently for the most part, connecting up with male travellers for short periods of time proved to an effective strategy for abating male harassment in certain destinations:

‘If you’re with a bloke you can always pretend they’re your husband or something’ (J, 27).

‘Occasionally I do like to travel with other guys ... Men tend to be quite adventurous and you get to go to places and see things you might not if you’re on your own’ (A, 25).

‘You really had to pair up with someone, because otherwise you’d just be harassed. ... I sort of met up with an Englishman that lived in Crete, and I spent a bit of time with him in Athens ... so I always made sure I had someone’ (M, 49).

For those who did not have a history of solo travel or were fearful because of a lack of local knowledge, joining tours could provide a secure space and a chance for social interaction. In destinations where languages other than English predominated, such tours gave the women an initial sense of familiarity with the area and its cultural norms. By linking up with tour groups, some women established enough confidence that they felt they had the courage to continue their journeys alone:

‘[Tours are] a ready and convenient way to see places that would be really difficult to see on your own ... if you didn’t have transport or didn’t have knowledge – local knowledge’ (C, 45).

‘I’d always had a huge thing about India, but I was nervous about going there, as a lone traveller. ... I guess that’s why in India, I took the tour ... I really wanted some sort of people that spoke the language, that knew their way around the public transport’ (M, 49).

‘I don’t speak any Chinese – I knew that it would be a difficult country to start off with ... and I was pleased that I’d gone on the tour for that’ (S, 40).
‘I did the tour through Vietnam because I hadn’t travelled for such a long period and lost all my confidence - that’s why I went on a guided tour through Vietnam, and once I’d left that in Hanoi and headed over to Laos, I was free!’ (P, 42).

5.4.5 Exit

When faced with constraints such as harassment and unwanted attention from men, a number of women negotiated by ‘exiting’ the country or region where this was occurring. It should be noted, however, that none of the women spoke of going home, but rather of ‘getting out’ of the constraining country or region and then continuing to travel solo in destinations perceived to be less difficult. While having to leave a country or area because of harassment was viewed as a negative constraint, this action is reported here as a negotiation strategy in that it allowed the women to continue their journeys.

In all cases where women negotiated by leaving a country, they were doing so because of unwanted attention or harassment from men. This occurred in a range of destinations, but stories usually revolved around places like Greece, Morocco, Indonesia, Pakistan and India. By exiting these countries and entering others, several women found that travel became easier for them as solo females:

‘I was so pleased to get out of Crete, because you couldn’t actually be sitting on your own in a cafe without being pestered by men. That’s why I didn’t go to Ithaca, because I just thought I couldn’t take it any more’ (M, 49).

‘I just had such a bad feeling in Morocco from the men, like I just didn’t want to stay in the place’ (M, 31).

‘I had sexual harassment in Lake Toba and throughout the other places I had it as well and I thought, I can’t handle this, and I actually ended up leaving and going back into Malaysia’ (P, 42).

‘In Pakistan - it was the only place it ever happened - they do not approve of women on their own travelling, or walking in the street, or whatever. And I did it because I was there and I wanted to see the places I was in, and I was pushed and I was spat on, and
abused in a language I didn’t understand. ... You know when it’s abuse, and I just didn’t want to stay’ (C, 62).

For some solo women travellers, the physical action of literally crossing a border could mean immediate relief from the male gaze:

‘It was such a relief to go, get on the boat and go over the Channel into England, into Saxon England, away from the men in Greece’ (M, 49).

‘As soon as I crossed that border from India into Nepal, the Nepalese men had no problem, absolutely none, with women travelling alone’ (J, 43).

‘It took me two days of travelling to get out of Iran, and I was really relieved when I hit Turkey again. And Eastern Turkey has a reputation for being quite Islamic anyway, but for me it was like being back home – I didn’t have to wear the big black cape and there were more tourists around’ (A, 25).

For another woman, leaving Italy and entering Ireland provided relief from ‘unpleasant’ experiences of harassment. For this woman, Ireland was more comfortable as it was a culture which represented her own more closely in terms of acceptable interactions between men and women:

‘In Ireland, I found men related to me as a single traveller really differently - in a really friendly, but much more personable, way, you know - treating me as a person that they were interested in ... liking to talk for the sake of talking and being able to have a discussion or talk about history, or all sorts of other things and there not necessarily being a sexual agenda’ (C, 45).

Not all women, however, left countries permanently as a result of harassment. For P (42), who left Indonesia for Malaysia, a short break away renewed her sense of determination and confidence. As a result, she returned to Indonesia to continue her solo journey:  ‘I stayed in Malaysia for three days and I thought, no stuff it. I’m angry! This is my holiday, they’re ruining my holiday, and that’s when I came back into Indonesia. ... It was enough to chase me away but then I went back with a bit of an attitude problem’ (P, 42).
5.6 Summary

This chapter has provided evidence that the women interviewed for this study find ways and means to negotiate their solo travel constraints. Three broad, overarching responses to constraint were identified, depending on the stage of travel at which the women were located. By adopting positive and determined mindsets, self-focusing, prioritising their lives and commitments, embracing their fears and planning and preparing, the women were able to ‘access’ solo travel opportunities and depart for overseas travel. Some women, however, did not wish to or did not have the opportunity to access travel. Instead, they chose to ‘withdraw’ from solo travel by postponing travel until a later date, by deciding to share future travel with significant others or by discontinuing solo travel altogether.

Finally, if women chose to access solo travel, then they were faced with a new set of in-situ constraints. During the solo travel experience, the women relied upon a number of negotiation strategies to ensure they could ‘continue’ and enjoy their journeys. Such strategies were to adapt and respect the local cultures and people, modify their dress and behaviour, use self-protection mechanisms, join other travellers in times of need and exit the constraining country or region.

Both this chapter and Chapter 4 have dealt separately with the issues of constraint and negotiation. Chiefly, this was a decision based on providing a clean presentation of ideas and results around these two key elements of these women’s solo travel experiences. In reality, however, the women in this study did not so easily and neatly separate their constraints from their negotiation strategies. The aim of the following, and final, results chapter is to explore in further detail the relationships between the solo women travellers’ constraints and their means of negotiation. That is, how does a solo female traveller work through her constraints-negotiation process as it progresses from her home environment, through to the travel experience, and then back home again? Also, it is important to consider what factors might influence this process, as it is assumed that not all women experience or perceive constraint in exactly the same ways. Examining
this process will enable a more holistic picture of how the women in this study negotiated their constraints, set against the backdrop of their wider everyday lives and experiences.
CHAPTER 6: A MODEL OF THE CONSTRAINTS-NEGOTIATION PROCESS

“Leisure is a matter of choice but this choice is made within a system of opportunities and constraints. Our degree of choice and the nature of these opportunities and constraints vary according to who we are and where we are” (Mowl & Towner, 1995; p. 113).

Chapters 4 and 5 dealt with constraint and negotiation, respectively, as they pertained to the solo travel experiences of the forty women interviewed in this study. These women’s stories of constraint and negotiation were separated into individual results chapters to provide the space needed for describing each element in detail. In Chapter 4, the constraints impacting on the women, both prior to and during their solo travel experiences, were identified, categorised and discussed. Chapter 5 offered a categorised description of how the women responded to and negotiated their reported constraints at both stages of the travel experience. Both of these results chapters were kept deliberately descriptive in an effort ‘let the data speak for itself’ (Wolcott, 1994; p. 10).

It became evident, however, that in terms of the women’s actual experience, constraint and negotiation were more complex than this separation may imply. The aim of this final results chapter is to more fully represent the descriptive data reported in the previous two chapters, exploring the relationship between the solo women travellers’ constraints and their negotiation strategies. As Wolcott (1994; p. 10) explains, the goal of analysis is to “expand and extend beyond a purely descriptive account with an analysis that proceeds in some careful, systematic way to identify key factors and relationships among them”. Through the presentation of a diagrammatic model, these key factors and relationships are outlined in this chapter, as are the broader influences which affect a woman’s individual ability to negotiate her constraints.
6.1 A Model of the Constraints-Negotiation Process

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), one of the best ways to present analyses of qualitative data is to ‘think display’, or to diagrammatise, the process under investigation. Wolcott (1994) refers to this process as ‘displaying one’s findings’. Such diagrams and models assist both the analyst and the reader in better understanding the processes at hand, moving beyond description through words towards a more interpretive, theoretical analysis of the qualitative data (Creswell, 1998).

The aim in presenting this diagrammatic model is not to reduce the complex nature of the women’s experience to a static, overly linear process. It is acknowledged that any model of human experience attests to only a snapshot in time, reflecting the analyst’s abstract interpretation of ‘what is going on’ with regard to social phenomena. Thus, the model outlined in this section depicts a considered interpretation of how the women interviewed negotiated their solo travel constraints. Indeed, the women’s lives, societal influences and experiences of solo travel will continually be shifting, moving and changing, therefore the model presented can reflect only an interpretation founded on the data gathered at one particular point in time.

The model in Figure 6.1 begins with a representative amalgamation of the research participants, that is, a ‘Potential Solo Woman Traveller’. What follows is a pathway to solo travel that serves to model the emerging responses and experiences women can face. For example, for this woman to enter into a solo travel experience, she must at some stage realise her interest, opportunities and motives to travel. At this stage, the potential solo woman traveller remains in her home environment, but her actions may be influenced by one or a number of ‘precedent’ constraints. These constraints may be socio-cultural, personal, practical or spatial in nature, as outlined in Chapter 4. It should be noted that in this model, there is no assumption that a woman must deal ‘successfully’ with one type of constraint before dealing with another, as implied in hierarchical theories offered in the leisure literature (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson &
Godbey, 1991). Instead, the shaded box labelled ‘Precedent Constraints’ shows four, free-floating constraints types, which are of equal status and which have the ability to impact at the same time.

Figure 6.1: A Model of the Constraints-Negotiation Process for Solo Women Travellers
For instance, a woman may face constraints such as negative attitudes towards her travel from others in her social group, or she may experience certain personal fears and doubts about her ability to travel alone. At this juncture, there are two negotiation responses to deal with these precedent constraints. For a number of reasons, as outlined in Chapter 5, she may decide to ‘Withdraw’ from solo travel, by postponing travel, deciding to share travel with others or discontinuing travel altogether. On the other hand, she may respond by relying upon a number of negotiation strategies which allow ‘Access’ to solo travel, such as employing positive determination, embracing her fears, prioritising her life to allow for travel, planning/preparing and focusing on herself and her own needs instead of others’. These strategies are not meant to connect neatly with a particular type of constraint; rather, the circle implies a pool of strategies upon which a woman may draw when confronted with any type (or types) of constraint.

Furthermore, the double arrow between constraints and negotiation demonstrates a continuous cycle whereby one moves back and forth between constraints and negotiation. Once this process of constraints-negotiation is resolved, then it is assumed that the woman makes a final decision to begin her journey. The bold ‘departure’ line in the model indicates a physical departure point, signifying a movement in space and time from the woman’s home life to her arrival in the tourist destination. This physical ‘departure’ would normally occur when boarding an aeroplane or departing her country of origin/place of residence.

After this point, the woman begins to physically experience her solo travel. She is now outside of her home environment and culture, experiencing the environments and cultures of other destinations. Thus, everything above the ‘Departure’ line essentially refers to the women’s pre-travel experience, and everything below to the in-situ experience of solo travel.

Once travelling solo, the woman confronts a new set of constraints. While these ‘In-situ’ constraints may be socio-cultural, personal, practical or spatial in nature, they manifest in new and different ways once at the destination. The negotiation response shown here is to choose to ‘Continue’ the solo journey by finding active
strategies to deal with the constraint(s). As discussed in Chapter 5, five key strategies were used by the solo women travellers in this study to help them to continue their journeys. These tactics were to modify their behaviour, adapt to the culture they were visiting, use strategies of self-protection, join others or exit the country. There is also an option here for ‘returning home’, as two women found the constraints difficult enough to warrant going back home. Again, no hierarchy is inherent in the choice of negotiation strategy as the solo woman traveller may rely on one or a number of these strategies to confront her constraints.

Solo travel then evolves as a continuing cycle of constraints-negotiation, and further constraints-negotiation, as shown in the double-arrowed loop. This indicates that, after dealing with a number of constraints, new challenges may emerge that also have to be negotiated. Thus, the process begins again, and the cycle will continue until such time where she decides to end her solo travels, and return to her place of origin.

### 6.2 Influences on the Constraints-Negotiation Process

As shown in Figure 6.1, three factors float outside the model that exert a continuous and cyclical influence on the constraints-negotiation process. While the process outlined inside the box represents how the women collectively negotiate their constraints, it does not address some of the broader factors which may influence why individual women perceive constraints in different ways, or how they are able to negotiate. These ‘influences’ attest to the fact that each woman is an individual, with her own personality, life history, attitudes, outlook and philosophy. While similarities were indeed evident among the women’s stories, their experience of and attitude towards constraint varied, as did their ability and willingness to negotiate. As Henderson et al. (1996; p. 208) recognise, women have differing abilities to negotiate their leisure constraints, depending on factors such as their personal resources, attitudes and self-confidence.
Being aware of these influencing factors contextualises the women’s experiences of constraint and negotiation. According to feminist leisure researchers, women’s experience of leisure and of constraint must always be linked back to the individual’s life and the socio-cultural milieu in which she lives, for it is these contexts from which constraints emerge and in which constraints are actually experienced (Henderson, 1997; Little, 2002; Shaw, 1985). Without such broader considerations, our understanding of women’s experience remains purely descriptive and isolated from the structures and contexts in which that experience takes place. As Henderson (1991b; p. 369) notes:

Critical feminist analysis of the research on leisure constraints suggests that to really understand constraints we must also examine definitions of leisure, leisure motivations, leisure satisfactions, and the contexts in which women and men live.

Based on the women’s stories, three factors were found to be influential in the constraints-negotiation process. These were the women’s ‘previous travel experience’, their ‘attitude to travel’ and their ‘travel motivations’. Combined, it was found that these factors all bore influence on the ways in which a woman perceives and negotiates her solo travel constraints. In the following section, each of these factors is discussed to explicate their meaning and to contextualise their influence on the women’s actions and lives.

6.2.1 Previous Travel Experience

As shown in Chapter 4, a woman’s first solo trip abroad was often recalled as a particularly fearful and constraining time, where she felt unsure about the safety of her movements in unfamiliar tourist spaces and cultures. Generally speaking, increased experiences of solo travel seemed to abate some of the fears and lack of confidence that women felt in these early journeys. As two women reflected, the more travel they did, the more confident they felt in future experiences of solo travel:
‘You don’t become an independent traveller overnight, but do it in stages, building on your confidence and becoming more adventurous each time you hit the road’ (S, 32).

‘The more experience you get and the more you know what you could be up against, I think the more cautious you are, because you realise that you can get yourself into all sorts of strife if you’re not careful … so you’re more confident in some ways, and more realistic about the potential dangers or difficulties’ (C, 45).

In planning for their initial solo journeys, some women deliberately selected what they perceived to be ‘easy’ destinations in which to take their first steps alone. Once the challenges and difficulties associated with initial unfamiliar environments had been overcome, the women felt confident to continue their journeys to other destinations alone:

‘I think probably travelling on my own in Vietnam gave me the confidence to travel further afield on my own’ (J, 55).

‘I think once I’d left Laos and travelled throughout Asia I felt quite confident that I could get from A to B on my own with no problems’ (P, 42).

For other women reflecting on their earlier experiences of solo travel, they found that as they progressed from ‘novice’ to ‘more experienced’ travellers, they had fewer fears and were less nervous about going alone. Establishing a sense of familiarity came with time spent in a place, getting to know the people and their ways of life. Knowing what to do and how to do it enabled the women to feel more confident and less fearful of their ability to attract danger:

‘I’m much more competent now as a traveller. Just all sorts of basics about, you know, your options about finding places to stay and how to keep things safe and secure and how not to look like a tourist but to sort of blend into the scenery’ (C, 45).

‘I survived the Baltics on my own – I think it might have toughened me up a bit, due to the fact that I arrived in Warsaw at 5 a.m. without a single butterfly in my stomach, when the first time I was nearly sick at the thought of it’ (H, 19).
‘I found it so easy - once you had a pattern ... there was nothing to stop me. You’re sort of going through steps, everywhere you go, so there’s no fear of, “oh, I don’t know what to do, or I won’t be able to handle that”, because it is all a pattern’ (C, 62).

‘I think if you know where you’re going and what you’re doing, like my returning to Istanbul after having been there only 3 months beforehand, I didn’t find that difficult at all. And I had, in that first visit, learned that the Turkish people are very lovely, very helpful, friendly, interested, so that works both ways and never had any uncomfortable feelings at all’ (A, 52).

Furthermore, the nature and type of constraint experienced could change with increased experience of solo travel, as one woman found: ‘I think initially it [the constraint] was safety and then after a while it was not being able to communicate fully’ (A, 45). Thus, for this woman, there was a progression of constraint, beginning with concerns about safety and security, and then evolving to more ‘mundane’ issues like not being able to speak the local language.

Increased experience of travelling alone could also contribute to a sense of confidence in dealing with male harassment and unwanted attention. One woman found that with each subsequent trip to India she was more able to effectively cope with male heckling: ‘I don’t hear it any more; I don’t even think about it’ (A, 25). Similar reports were made by another woman, who found that experience gained through additional solo travel made it easier to deal with male attention in Italy:

‘In Rome, just last year, I had these outrageous propositions from the local men. I think I was at a level of maturity and experience, I could just laugh. And just enjoy the experience. It didn’t scare me, as it probably would have done a few years ago’ (S, 32).

Acknowledging that her own behaviour and confidence played a part in her abilities to deal with male harassment, a woman in her forties also found that merely growing older influenced her ability to negotiate:
‘Sometimes I think it’s just got nothing to do with you, and sometimes it depends on how you conduct yourself. And the fact that I’m much older and so wouldn’t evoke the same response, because you don’t when you’re in your forties – and you also behave differently ... so I’ve sort of travelled a lot on my own since, and not had nearly the same reaction’ (C, 45).

Based on such findings, blanket assumptions about all women being frightened or reserved about going alone should be avoided. It is apparent that the women varied in perceptions of going alone based on their level of previous solo travel experience. The more experience a woman had had with travel, and with undertaking that experience alone, the more confident she seemed to be in her ability to negotiate constraint and cope with the solo journey.

### 6.2.2 Attitude to Travel

In addition to the women’s prior solo travel experiences, their definitions of, and attitudes towards, travel also bore influence on the constraints-negotiation process. Many of the women interviewed held quite strong opinions about what ‘travel’ was and what it was not. These personal attitudes could impact on the way the women perceived and experienced their constraints, as well as influence the negotiation responses and strategies chosen.

A prominent theme from talking with these forty women was that they clearly saw a distinction between ‘travel’ and ‘tourism’. ‘Travel’, for these women, implied independent, unstructured, flexible and usually long-term types of journeys. ‘Travellers’ were in search of in-depth understanding of other cultures, local peoples and their ways of life. This sentiment can be summed up by one woman’s statement that ‘the easier it becomes to travel, the harder it is to be a traveller’ (P, 64). ‘Tourism’, in contrast, was described by the women as somewhat unfavourable: too structured, planned and rigid to allow for any real cultural understanding or serendipity. It should be noted that most of the women interviewed were more comfortable with the identification of themselves as ‘travellers’ than as ‘tourists’.
When asked to describe themselves as travellers, the women used words such as ‘flexible’, ‘independent’ ‘open’, ‘non-judgmental’, ‘interested’ and ‘observant’. As ‘travellers’, many of the women preferred budget accommodation such as hostels and small family-run ventures, rather than staying in hotels or resorts. This finding, of course, reflects the type of sample deliberately sought for the study, which was a group of solo, independent female travellers who desired the challenge of going alone and fending for themselves. The following quotes, only a sample of what appeared to be common opinion, demonstrate this perception of a dichotomy between ‘travel’ (which was sought) and ‘tourism’ (which was avoided):

‘I have some pretty strong feelings about what constitutes ‘travel’ and ‘holiday’. Some people believe that any trip overseas ... is travelling. To me, there is a marked difference. Holiday, to me, is just that: an enjoyable and relaxing or partying time, but travel to me is going to somewhere interesting, or exotic, culturally diverse and preferably with some archaeological interest’ (A, 58).

‘[Travel] is moving into someone else’s living space and someone else’s culture. It’s not seeing it from a tourist’s point of view, but a traveller’s point of view, so it’s trying to live it’ (J, 38).

‘I don’t like being a tourist ... a tourist denotes staying in nice hotels and package deals and having everything there. ... For me, a traveller is somebody who’s prepared to knuckle down to that next level and see what's really out there. To me that's the difference’ (A, 45).

‘I like to travel with locals, in local transport, local conditions and take risk ... travelling in the poorer countries, and living as close as possible to local living conditions’ (J, 55).

For these women, the solo travel experience revolved around concepts of risk, flexibility, newness and difference. These women enjoyed the unexpected experiences that independent, solo forms of travel allowed. ‘Being off the beaten track’, as one woman put it, was part of the appeal. Such definitions and perceptions help explain the women’s willingness to overcome constraint. If challenge, risk and uncertainty were welcomed as part of the solo travel
experience, then facing and negotiating the constraints of such travel became an easier and more accepted task. As one woman found, it was her flexible approach to life and travel that ‘helped me to adapt to whatever situations there were. ... In Ecuador, when we had floods, and [were] stuck on the side of the road for twenty-four hours, because there was no transport and the truck had broken down ... that flexibility helped me’ (P, 54).

For many of the women, travel meant spending time in a place, getting ‘close to’ and ‘exchanging with’ the local people and trying to immerse themselves in the culture. Taking time and moving in an open and unstructured manner were the only ways that the women felt they could really understand the cultures and people they were visiting:

‘I like to relax and take my time; immerse myself in the culture’ (K, 31).

‘I like to spend time getting to know a little about the country and place I am in – and the people’ (P, 42).

‘For me, travel is about letting go of my own standards and lifestyle and immersing myself into another culture; living and learning from people of a fundamentally different culture. Such travel as the latter teaches tolerance and has the potential to benefit both the traveller and the community’ (H, 19).

For this group of women, the philosophy toward travel was about engagement, not just observation. Thus, a number of women spoke about living in communities for weeks or months, offering their help and working alongside the local women:

‘I’ve always found it really hard being a tourist. So, I’d always go somewhere I knew I could do something, and spend a little time, I like to see a place, but I like to actually spend a lot of time in that place, and to actually feel like I’m exchanging in some way with whichever culture’ (N, 20).

‘In places like Nepal and India, I’d stay in different villages for weeks, quite often. And, you know, you kind of become a part of the community’ (M, 31).
It can be seen from such quotes that these are women who wish to see the new and the different, and who are prepared to move outside their usual standard of living to learn and understand how other people and cultures live. While faced with the constraints and challenges of solo travel, such as fear, loneliness and feeling conspicuous, negotiating these constraints is seen as a necessary part of releasing previously learned opinions and worldviews, and learning how to open up to others. For these women, revealing their more ‘allocentric’ desires and attitudes (Plog, 1994), negotiation of challenge forms part of the essence of solo travel.

### 6.2.3 Travel Motivations

The reasons why the women travelled solo also exerted an influence on the constraints-negotiation process. As shown in the previous two sections, the way that constraints were perceived by individual women were often a result of their own personal attitudes towards challenge as well as their previous experience with solo travel. The women’s willingness and ability to negotiate was also related to the strength of their motivation and desire for solo travel experiences.

Two key themes of motivation dominated the women’s stories: challenge/adventure and people/culture. For the most part, the women interviewed for this study were motivated to travel solo because they wanted to challenge themselves in some mental, spiritual or physical way, or because they wanted adventure. Linked with this motive of challenge and adventure was the women’s desire to see and experience the everyday lives and cultures of people living in countries and regions other their own.

#### 6.2.3.1 Challenge/Adventure

For many of the women who participated in this study, travelling solo was viewed as an opportunity for challenging themselves in ways that they could not do through other leisure activities at home. For some women, the thrill of solo travel
came from the challenge of arriving at new destinations and managing in new environments:

‘I go because I love the challenge of travelling alone, of arriving in a new town with a basic map and a backpack and coping with so many new experiences’ (K, 31).

‘I like to get in amongst it and experience all I can. ... I like being off the beaten track and independent – experiences are heightened; like going solo and remaining open to whatever is presented’ (J, 31).

For another woman, solo travel was viewed as one of life’s great challenges, and her motivation was to travel to Ecuador before she ‘got too old’: ‘For me, travelling is about challenging myself ... before I get too old to do a lot of these physical challenges. ... I know I need to be challenged, I always have been I think. Ever since I can remember as a child, I’ve enjoyed a challenge’ (P, 54).

Two other women thought the challenge of extended solo travel lay in giving up material security and mundane patterns created in life. For these women, travel opened the opportunity to break from unsatisfactory lifestyles and to start new chapters in life:

‘I desire the personal challenge. ... It’s sort of like tossing up everything in the air again. Everything got really secure, working for a bank, everything’s perfect in my life, you know. Gee, wonder if I can do it again? – it’s like tossing a dice again’ (T, 55).

‘I had to do something totally different, totally outside my square, totally outside my comfort zone. ... I had to really get away and make a complete break from my current lifestyle. ... And that was another reason why I felt I had to do this trip on a budget, was I had to learn how to live differently than how I had been living’ (D, 49).

Related to the challenge of solo travel was the desire for adventure. For many of the women interviewed, travelling alone overseas was perceived to be an adventurous experience, full of unpredictable and unknown outcomes that would challenge them at some level:
‘I like the unpredictability and adventure. Unlike home, you never know what will happen in any one day’ (D, 40).

‘Travel is about adventure ... going on an adventure. Doing something completely different. Living in a very different environment ... exploring, discovering, difference’ (A, 52).

‘I always wanted to travel on my own, and it was part of my spirit, too, like I really wanted to go ... It was in me and I wanted to do it, I wanted the adventure. I just wanted to go’ (J, 31).

Linked with their attitudes to travel, some women only associated adventure and challenge with solo ‘travel’, never with sedentary, hotel-based ‘tourism’: ‘Travel in my life means experiencing new things and new cultures – adventure. The idea [of] sitting around in a hotel does nothing for me – never has and never will. I must see and do different things’ (A, mid 50s). Or, as another noted: ‘Solo travel is more of an adventure; [you] can explore a place more in-depth’ (J, 31).

For yet others, the challenge of solo travel was as much about ‘inner’ experiences and adventures as it was about physically encountering new and different places: ‘Travel for me is as much an internal journey as an external adventure – perhaps more so as a solo traveller’ (A, 52). One woman sought a life of adventure to fill the mental and emotional gap left following a traumatic separation with her long-term partner: ‘Vanuatu and Europe were to get over an unhappy, failed relationship. So, they partly were intended to sort of snap me out of it and, you know, fill my life with amazing, interesting, extraordinary and adventurous things’ (C, 45).

### 6.2.3.2 People/Culture

In addition to travelling to satisfy a desire for personal challenge and adventure, the women were also motivated by meeting and interacting with local people and experiencing cultures different from their own:
‘Talking to people is what it’s about. It’s really interesting to speak to not only the local people, but also the fellow travellers who’ve come from different parts of the world’ (A, 58).

‘That’s why I’m there, you know. It’s to meet people and talk to them about their country and, you know, what they’re doing and what their culture is and what their religious beliefs are and what their marital beliefs are and, you know, the way they think, they do, and all that sort of stuff’ (L, 44).

‘I have a need for companionship. … Travelling solo meant I was constantly meeting a rich variety of people, mostly other travellers who were often older and wiser than me. Travelling inspires some very close and intense friendships that bring me close to people of different countries, different age groups and a healthy mix of male and female. It would be difficult to have such diverse friends at home’ (A, 25).

‘The way we live and think as human beings isn’t pre-ordained. I find different cultures fascinating – different ways of seeing and understanding life, why we do things the way we do them. Some things about human nature and being seem to be common across all cultures, but much is interpreted differently through the prism of cultural perspective’ (C, 45).

Knowing people and feeling part of something beyond themselves was also a motivator for some women. For one woman, establishing a social community was a prime motivator, as she had lost her parents early in her life: ‘I think for me, having my family go quite early from my life, I probably felt like - if you didn’t have family, then there must be some other way to experience family, and to me it would be through community, and I’ve discovered that that’s so. To have an international community is to have a family, and I think that’s sort of missing from modern day life, and I think it’s really important’ (A, 49).

A sense of international community and understanding others was evident in other women’s motivations. One woman’s desire to visit Vietnam partly stemmed from her desire to try and better understand the Vietnamese people with whom she worked at home: ‘In my work life I have lots of Vietnamese clients ... I want to know where they come from, I want to understand what they’ve gone through in
order to get here. ... I saw these people as being some of our newest immigrants, and worth understanding a bit more’ (S, 32).

Closely linked with meeting and interacting with people was the women’s desire to experience other cultures, religions and ways of living that could not be experienced to the same extent at home in Australia:

‘Other cultures have always really interested me – other types of lifestyles. ... I love different cultures’ (J, 31).

‘Well, one of the reasons I travelled to Europe was because I wanted a big blast of culture, because I’d been living in Alice Springs for so long’ (C, 45).

An interest in learning about different cultures and peoples often stemmed from the women’s personal histories with multi-culturalism, or with concerns and issues which they held at home:

‘I knew I just wanted to travel, and I was always interested in Indian culture, and women’s rights and you know, human rights issues, and things like that, so I always wanted to go to India’ (J, 27).

‘I’ve always been interested in other nationalities as well as the places that they come from. It’s good to speak with foreigners, yeah, I find that very good. My own high school education was with a lot of children who’d come from Europe after the war, and some of those kids had incredible tales to tell. So I always found that multicultural education, to me, was the norm, or what I liked’ (A, 58).

For these women, adventure, the incumbent need to meet new challenges and the desire to understand and know other people and cultures helped form not only their reasons for travel, but also their reactions to constraint. Seeing travel as a priority and willing to negotiate rather than succumb to constraints, the women’s stories were interwoven with examples of the motivations which supported their desires to travel solo. Reflecting a self-awareness and willingness to grow and learn through travel, the women’s motivations played an integral role in their ability to access travel and to ensure ongoing participation.
6.3 A Case Study: ‘A’s’ Story of Solo Travel, Constraint and Negotiation

Thus far, these three results chapters have endeavoured to unpack the commonalities among the solo women travellers interviewed, demonstrating that shared experience of constraint and negotiation is evident. While there is shared experience, not all of these women encountered and negotiated their constraints in exactly the same ways. As noted previously, individual influences and factors need to be taken into account in an effort to show that 'woman' is not necessarily a homogenous group. A woman’s life backgrounds, previous travel experience, personality, attitudes and motivations all played a part in affecting how she perceived and responded to constraint. Thus, within the broad abstraction of interpreted similarity are particular stories of difference. To exemplify how an individual woman works through the constraints-negotiation process, a case study of one woman’s story of solo travel is presented.

It should be noted that this particular woman’s story was selected as it was a very good example of the types of constraints and negotiation processes faced by many of the women. Although this woman was a younger interviewee (25 years of age), and obviously differed from some of the other women in terms of the life cycle, she was particularly articulate, honest and effusive in her interview with regard to the constraints she faced, and her interview produced an unusually poignant and rich account of solo travel. While an individual account is presented here in this section, her comments reflect concerns and issues common to many of the participants interviewed, regardless of age, life history or life stage. The inclusion of this case study essentially has the aim of bringing more depth and insight to the raft of results presented in the prior chapters.

A self-confessed India ‘addict’, A. has travelled solo to India several times. She was 25 years old at the time of interview, and undertaking postgraduate studies in education at an Australian university. A. traces her love for freedom, exploration and travel to her family’s annual camping trips around Australia: ‘Dad was a teacher, and he had the holidays so we used to go camping for three months every
Christmas ... I always look back to these experiences and think, that’s where my travel bug came from, because I loved it. I loved the freedom - they’re my happiest memories from my childhood.

The first time A. went to India, she was 18 years old and was travelling with friends in their university holidays. While always interested in going to India, she was constrained by her precedent fear of not having the confidence to go alone, so she chose to go with friends instead. During that initial trip, in-situ constraints emerged, leaving her feeling further limited by fear, a lack of confidence and a lack of local cultural knowledge. Subsequently, she remained for the most part in the safety of her hotel, not venturing out unless aided by her companions:

‘That first trip in India I couldn’t imagine doing things by myself, because I wasn’t aware enough of the culture. ... The first trip I didn’t have a clue what I was doing. ... and my friend said that she wanted to go somewhere by herself without the rest of us – and I was just so horrified - I couldn't believe she’d even contemplate to go anywhere by herself – I was so scared for her ... I barely went out, you know, if I went out of the hotel by myself and went shopping, I thought that was a big thing’.

In this way, A. was spatially constrained by a perception that her solo female status would limit her ability to move about freely and safely. Despite these fears and constraints, this first travel experience sparked a love affair with India, and A. has visited the country many times since. Part of the appeal of India for A. is that it offers her an experience of adventure and excitement that she feels is lacking in everyday Australian life: ‘It’s a big adventure – every day’s an adventure. ... India’s such an amazing place and every day is like a huge, exciting thing. That’s why I love it. I participate in many eye-opening, challenging, exciting and adventurous activities’. Travelling in India also allows A. to feel freer to express her alternative, spiritual and ‘colourful’ side, which she thinks remains more hidden in Australia:

‘I do feel so restricted here [at home in Australia], that’s why I love India because I really can be me over there. ... I feel so happy when I’m there, I feel like I can be really me when I’m there, not that I can’t be here in a way, but I find, like, you’re a little bit
kind of drab in comparison to India. It’s the festivals and colour and I can wear all these bright colourful clothes. ... it’s a dream’.

Continually ‘pushing beyond my fear barriers’ to seek out new travel adventures, A. now prefers to travel to India alone. She feels that solo travel allows her a level of autonomy and freedom that she is not able to access at home:

‘I have a need for freedom – time, space, autonomy to do what I want to do day by day. I have a huge need for freedom that is difficult to meet in the structured day to day life at home. ... I like to travel alone because it means I am free to pursue my interests. ... I’m a very independent person and I guess it’s kind of like the selfish thing. Like, I want to do what I want to do and when I wake up in the morning I think, “what do I want to do today?”’.

In fact, A. feels that her experience with travelling alone in India is at such a level that she feels entirely comfortable and at home there: ‘India’s kinda like home now’. She has also travelled solo to other destinations such as the United Kingdom, Japan, Iran and Nepal. She finds that travelling solo allows her to indulge in her love of meeting the local people and learning about their culture: ‘I tend to travel by myself because it means that I’m meeting either other travellers all the time, or meeting lots of Indian people. ... I travel to become as much involved with the local culture ... I have a really strong wish to get into the culture and really see it for what it is. ... I travel for the love of observing, and if possible participating in/with the different lifestyles, customs, languages and religions’.

Initially travelling to India as what she calls a ‘sightseer’, A. has become more confident and has progressed to staying longer and becoming more heavily involved in spiritual pursuits such as yoga and Buddhism: ‘Perhaps at the beginning I used to go and see the big temples and the big museums and all that – I’m not really into that now, it doesn’t interest me so much. ... I’ve been involved with learning about Buddhism and so that’s become much more part of my life. ... The next trip for me will be to go learn more about yoga’. A. now tends to avoid
the cities in India, preferring to evade the ‘tourists’ and explore more rural areas where she feels she can better interact with local people:

‘I fly into a big city and then I head to the mountains or I head to the south and I get out and – I love to be in places where there are no tourists, or just the odd tourist, and then local people are really interested in me as a person and I can get involved with them, as people. They’re not wanting to sell me anything and I don’t want to buy. Like, I don’t go overseas to go shopping, I go over to learn about the culture’.

A. has experienced the full range of socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial constraints during her solo travel experiences. When trying to access a visit to Iran, for example, she was refused a visa outright because she was a single Western woman, but was able to negotiate access through sheer persistence: ‘You’re not even allowed to get a visa to go to Iran as a single female, but I pestered the Embassy for two months in London and then I made friends with a woman there, and explained that I wanted to go to Iran to look at the historical sites, and anyhow I got my way in. But it was two months of pestering everyday on the telephone: “give me a visa”. “No”.

A. also noted being subject to a range of incidents of sexual harassment while travelling solo, particularly in Iran and India: ‘I’ve had so many experiences of sexual harassment overseas. ... I was attacked in Iran, nearly raped by some guys in a taxi - that's one extreme - and then I’ve had men, like, masturbate in front of me many times in India, which isn’t very nice either’. The attempted rape in Iran resulted in A. making the choice to negotiate by exiting the country and returning to her base in the UK. Yet she seemed reluctant to dwell on or discuss this experience, as she clearly loved Iran and only wanted to emphasise her positive experiences in the country. By relying on a positive, determined and pragmatic mindset, she was able to negotiate such challenges and continue to enjoy her solo travels: ‘I hate to tell that story in a way, because it doesn't show the best of the trip. ... I had such a wonderful time for the rest of Iran’. In fact, A. chose to view her attack in Iran as ‘a learning experience’ and something which could just as easily have happened at home:
'It didn't turn me off the Middle East or anything because I still had a lot of travel to go and it’s never turned me off travelling by myself, at all. I remember an Irani man said to me the day that it happened, “well, you know, if you got in a taxi at four o’clock in the morning in your country that could happen too”. And in a way it kind of could – it doesn’t reflect badly for me on Iran and it just was a good learning experience’. 

Despite such incidents, A. maintains that she now experiences few problems or constraints while travelling alone, attributing this to her ability to adapt and to her obvious love for the countries and people she visits:

‘I have spent two years in India and I can’t imagine that I’ve just been lucky to miss out on all those sort of disasters. And I think it could come down to my love for India. I think I exude it and I think that people just see that I’m there because I love the place and if anyone talks to me long enough, they realise that I’m truly there because I love their country… you know, no one would ever hassle me once they realise that, because like I said, Indian people are so proud of their culture and they like to think that someone's really interested and I'm always interested to talk to local people and so that's why I think I haven't had problems’.

A number of learned negotiation strategies have assisted A. in becoming more confident in her abilities to ‘go alone’, and to ward off unwanted male attention. She has found that modifying her dress and behaviour to fit local norms of female decorum have helped, in addition to having naturally dark features: ‘What I’ve learned over the years is that I'm very lucky in that my complexion's quite dark and I have dark hair and I wear Indian clothes … and I know a bit of Hindi now and so I can speak the language a fair bit. … I kind of almost can, not exactly pass for an Indian, but I certainly blend in. … I’m short and don’t stand out in any way, and I’ve noticed that foreign girls who are tall and blonde – it’s much more difficult’. Acquiring and speaking some of the local vernacular proved to be a particularly effective coping mechanism to deal with unwanted male attention in India: ‘I can speak enough Hindi now – like the thing is, we are so different to Indian women so perhaps they don’t expect for a woman to tell them to, “go away, piss off!”’
A. also exuded a pragmatic approach to fear and harassment, perceiving that the difficulty of a woman’s solo travel experience lay much with one’s own behaviour and mindset: ‘I also am aware of the other type of female travelling - who I’ve come across a lot – the rather nervous and shy and type, and also feeling almost like victimised. I generally try not to get involved in their conversations, but I hear them all the time. Whingeing about “men did this and men did that and it's so hard, and if only I was a man” and I don’t like it, I suppose, hearing those sort of things and I think that they need to find some more strength, somewhere. Because they don't need to be a victim because there's plenty of people like me who have had really great experiences’.

At A’s particular stage in life (mid-twenties), she has also felt constrained in terms of how much travel is socially acceptable for a woman her age: ‘I think there's a certain challenge in society's expectations that one year of travel's probably a good experience for a lot of people to have and then as time goes on I've noticed – I've internalised the societal expectation that I should come back or I should work’. In her mid-twenties, A. also noted the pull of family expectations; caught between her love for India and guilt at her parents’ desire for her to return home:

‘They were so disappointed that after all this time travelling – well, they don’t understand about me and India ... they're very traditional, old fashioned sort of people, they're not interested in hippie stuff - so they said, “if you don't come home now you may as well stay in India for the rest of your life 'cause we're not really interested and you don't respect our family”, and so that made it hard’. It’s probably been the most difficult time I’ve ever had, trying to weigh up – come home and study at Uni, stay in India which I love, make my parents happy – oh, wow!’.

These expectations from society and others resulted in A. making the decision to withdraw from travel temporarily so she could focus on her current life choices, continue her studies and ‘be sensible’. It has been a difficult decision to live with: ‘For the last few years I haven’t really been travelling much. ... Now my whole life direction has really changed ... but the trouble is all my good friends are still over there in India, a friend’s talking about travel, my sister’s going travelling next week and there’s all these people around me who are going off travelling and
it really is so hard for me! It’s so unsettling for me. I really didn’t want to come home to study ... but I thought I ought to do something a little bit sensible and so I came home, and yeah, I still perhaps can’t be sure that I made the right decisions, and so that’s a bit hard’.

Yet A. has merely postponed her travels, and remains positive by anticipating future journeys and trusting in the serendipity of life: ‘I left myself open, that if I didn’t like Uni then I would go back ... but I’ve been enjoying what I’m doing here and I can see it’s good for me and it’ll be good in the future, and that I can just pick up again and go. ... I trust in the universal order of things and there a lot of things that conspired to bring me home to be here now and that’s just the way it is. ... You can’t force anything to happen and you just have to see which way the direction takes you ‘cause I know well enough that no plans ever really eventuate. So I’ll just see what happens’.

6.4 Summary

This final results chapter has presented a model of the constraints-negotiation process of the solo women travellers interviewed for this study. This holistic model showed, diagrammatically, how the women actually worked through the process of responding to and coping with their precedent and in-situ constraints. In presenting this model, some of the links between constraint and negotiation have been forged, showing that the two aspects do not work in isolation and that they exert a different influence at different stages of the solo travel experience.

Through analysis in all three results chapters, it became evident that negotiation strategies were not just automatic, blanket responses to constraints. At times the women’s negotiation strategies were planned, conscious and deliberate responses to constraint. In other instances, however, the women were unaware of their intentions, as they had to act spontaneously and learn ‘on the spot’. No fixed links were evident between particular constraints and negotiation strategies, although some types of coping mechanisms seemed to be especially useful for certain kinds
of challenges. Rather, the model shows that the women drew on a pool of coping mechanisms to deal with a range of constraints, altering their strategies depending on the circumstance, situation or event. As such, the model presented deliberately indicates a broad, linear pattern of what occurs, but is flexible enough to allow for change, serendipity and choice.

While the model is informative for detailing and describing the constraints-negotiation process as a whole, a number of individual factors also exerted an influence. It was found through speaking with the women that the resources, willingness and ability they had to negotiate were dependent on a combination of factors, including their previous travel experience, their general attitudes and perceptions of travel and their travel motivations.

One woman’s story was provided as a case study to emphasise how she, as an individual, managed her solo travel constraints. This case study revealed that the negotiation of her constraints did not take place in a social or cultural vacuum, as the process was influenced by societal and familial expectation, her life stage, her personal attitude towards constraint and the strength of her desires for autonomy and adventure through solo travel. The next chapter will discuss the meaning and relevance of the totality of the results presented in this and the previous two chapters, linking the discussion back to the wider theory and literature on the gendered nature of women, solo travel and constraint.
The forty women interviewed in this study had participated in and were consumers of travel. They had travelled solo around the world, and so were evidently able to access the resources, opportunities and freedoms which made travel possible. Despite these apparent privileges, this access was not easily won, nor was it always freely available. In Chapter 4, a range of constraints was described, which served to limit and modify the women’s access to solo travel. Nevertheless, these constraints had been overcome by these women who had travelled solo, suggesting that they were able to locate strategies to overcome their pre-travel constraints. These ‘access’ strategies were outlined and discussed in the first part of Chapter 5.

Unlike previous theorisations of constraint which stop at the point of participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991), this study went further to show that constraints also limited and modified aspects of the solo travel experience itself. The results in the latter half of Chapter 5 demonstrated how these women were able to negotiate through a range of attitudes, behaviours and strategies and thus ‘continue’ their solo journeys. In Chapter 6, the relationships between constraints and negotiations were explored, and a more holistic model of the constraint-negotiation process was developed.

In the previous three results chapters, the focus was on using the women’s words to provide a detailed and categorised description of how they experienced and negotiated constraint. Strauss and Corbin (1998; p. 19) refer to this descriptive process as ‘conceptual ordering’. Conceptual ordering is an essential task in
CHAPTER 7: Discussion

grounded theory and phenomenologically-inspired paradigms, as it demonstrates the ‘essence’ of the women’s stories and lays the groundwork for further interpretation and theory building. For this research to be interpretive, however, it needed to move beyond mere description and detail (Wolcott, 1994). Therefore, the purpose of this discussion chapter is to consider the results presented and interpret their meaning and theoretical relevance; to look beyond what the women were saying and locate the essence of their stories within a wider social, cultural and gendered context.

There are three key themes on which this interpretive discussion hinges. The first theme begins by reviewing the women’s solo travel constraints, considering them against a backdrop of previous research. Salient issues of constraint are also highlighted, such as the impact of fear on the women’s use of tourist spaces and places. The second theme revisits the women’s negotiation responses and strategies, linking these strategies to theory on the concepts of structure, agency, power and resistance. The final theme of this discussion uncovers the major theoretical thrust of this thesis: that these women are experiencing a ‘relative escape’ when they access and participate in solo travel. That is, while women have the freedoms, opportunities and resources to travel solo, their ability to access those freedoms will always be determined by, and relative to, their social location as females within the social, cultural and gendered structures and sexualised environments of both home and abroad (Jordan & Gibson, 2000; Wimbush & Talbot, 1988).

7.1 Reins, Roles and Responsibilities: The Influence of Constraint on Women’s Solo Travel

As shown in Chapter 4, grounded analysis of the in-depth interviews led to the development of four overarching categories (or types) of constraint. These were the ‘socio-cultural’ context, the women’s ‘personal’ attitudes and perceptions, the ‘practical’ challenges related to solo travel, and the ‘spatial’ restrictions on the women’s movements in travel spaces and places. These overarching themes were
then broken down into more detailed sub-categorisations. While these themes and sub-themes were based on a grounded analysis of these forty women’s words, their experiences and constraints were not unique to them. There was an evident commonality between the constraints faced by these solo women travellers and those encountered by other types of tourists and leisure seekers, revealing the broader relevance of this study’s findings.

First of all, it was apparent from the women’s stories that they share constraints with other types of tourists, particularly structural/resource constraints like a lack of time and money (Blazey, 1987; Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter, 2002), difficulties with access (Tian, Crompton & Witt, 1996) and government restrictions and visas (Dellaert, Ettema & Lindh, 1998). Like other tourists, these women also noted interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints related to approval from others (Blazey, 1987), work commitments and family responsibility (Dellaert, Ettema & Lindh, 1998; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter), self-doubt (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999; Smith, 1987) and a lack of suitable travel companions (Blazey, 1987; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002). While it is difficult to make direct comparisons between the solo women travellers and the tourists in these other studies because of different sample types (senior travellers, nature-based tourists, tourists with a disability, museum-goers etc), it is apparent that some parallels can be deduced. Lack of finances and difficulties in accessing time away from work have been widely reported and demonstrate the pervasive nature of certain types of constraints for all people trying to access travel. However, such comparisons do not highlight the unique nature of constraints faced by women travellers, and also do not consider the reasons for why female tourists may have difficulties in accessing the time and money for travel (Henderson, 1991).

There is some research available on the constraints of solo and independent women travellers with which more direct comparisons and considerations can be made. The constraints noted by these forty Australian solo women travellers echo those reported by other female travellers. Westerhausen’s (1997) study of backpackers in South-East Asia revealed that 90% of his sample (both male and female) felt that travelling was ‘different’ for a woman. The reasons for this were
largely related to the nature of constraints encountered. For example, the women backpackers in Westerhausen’s study noted that they were more privy to encounters of sexual harassment, sexist attitudes and rape. It was also reported by these women that they had to be more careful of their movements and behaviour when travelling, which could work to limit their enjoyment and spatial freedoms. Jordan and Gibson (2000), in their interviews with British and American solo female travellers, reported similar findings, as women spoke of having to continually negotiate their fear of harassment and unwanted male attention through the use of strategies to keep safe.

The results in Chapter 4 also reveal that the solo women travellers face constraints of a similar nature to those experienced by other female leisure seekers. Little’s (2002) research on women’s participation in outdoor adventure recreation found that reported constraints grouped under the broad banners of ‘socio-cultural’, ‘family/other commitments’, ‘self’ and ‘technical’. Of particular relevance to this study, Little found that the constraints imposed by the social era in which the women were raised and the social expectations regarding responsibility for others exerted an especially constraining impact on their adventure choices. Others’ opinions of the inappropriateness of women taking part in adventurous, outdoor and ‘risky’ pursuits also emerged as a constraint for Little’s female adventurers. Similar results are seen in the solo women travellers’ stories, as they spoke of feeling bound by social expectation, their roles and responsibilities and the attitudes of others towards their solo travels. The solo women travellers and adventure recreationists also shared common personal and technical/practical constraints, as they struggled with their fears, lack of confidence and lack of skills when trying to access their travels and adventures.

At a more general level, the categories of socio-cultural, personal and practical are similar in nature, respectively, to the interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural constraints identified by Crawford and Godbey (1987). Socio-cultural constraints faced by the women, such as the influence of social expectation and others’ attitudes, are similar to Crawford and Godbey’s interpersonal challenges, in that they stem from interactions with family members, work colleagues and others in
one’s societal milieu. Intrapersonal constraints are those that relate to an individual’s own psychological and subjective perceptions, and this grouping is reflected in these women’s personal constraints of self-doubt, fear and lack of self-confidence. Finally, ‘structural’ constraints are similar in some ways to the women’s practical limitations, such as a lack of time and money and the loneliness of going solo.

The spatial category which emerged from this grounded research does not appear as a distinct category in the constraints literature, but stands out as a unique element of the solo female travel experience. There is little available research which has investigated spatial constraints in the context of women’s travel, although exceptions include empirical studies by Carr (1998, 2000), Hottola (2002) and Jordan and Gibson (2000). Yet work in feminist/new cultural geographies reveals gendered differences in terms of how women and men experience space and place. Spatial constraints were revealed as an important factor in these women’s stories of solo travel, as they found restrictions in their ability to move freely and without fear while travelling alone. Due to its relatively unique nature as a finding related to solo women’s travel, this issue is drawn out and discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In Crawford and Godbey’s (1987) hierarchical model, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints were discussed as discrete and separate entities, yet this study reveals a more inter-linking and relational connection among constraints. Empirical tests to verify the existence of these discrete constraints has proved problematic, however, primarily because of the dynamic nature of peoples lives and the diverse ways in which they perceive and experience constraints (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993a/b). This problem is encapsulated in Henderson and Bialeschki’s (1993a) statement that “the more one tries to isolate constraints and describe them, the more complex they become and the more difficult to make definitive statements” (p. 231). As Crawford and Godbey (1987) themselves pointed out in their earlier research, it would become increasingly necessary in future studies to explore the entire array of constraints simultaneously.
7.1.1 Inter-linkages among Constraints

Much of the constraints-focussed research in leisure and tourism has been quantitative in nature, aiming to verify or refute existing classifications (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Hudson, 2000; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002; Raymore, et al., 1993). While such empirical research has helped to isolate and quantify our understanding of leisure recreationists’ and tourists’ constraints, particularly structural and practical ones, it has not contributed to any in-depth or qualitative understanding of why constraints occur, how they impact on individuals and the ways in which they inter-link with other constraints to exert a cumulative influence.

In their later work, Crawford and his co-researchers (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991) took heed of one of their earlier suggestions that there may be interaction among intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural categories. They stated that an individual encounters his or her leisure constraints in an ordered, sequential fashion. That is, a person first experiences ‘lower order’, intrapersonal constraints, proceeds to confront ‘higher order’ intrapersonal limitations and then finally encounters even higher order structural barriers. Their model purports that only when both intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints are dealt with does an individual face structural constraints such as a lack of time or money. In Jackson et al.’s scenario, links are evident, but only in a linear and hierarchical sense.

While the categories identified in the present study (socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial) provide a simple, overarching classification of the types of constraints experienced by solo women travellers, it would be misleading to view them as discrete and isolated entities. Authors studying women’s leisure constraints have noted the importance of examining constraints types in concert, looking at the ways in which constraints are linked and work together to produce overall impact on women’s lives and leisure choices (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993a,b; Little, 2002). In this study, there was strong evidence of an overall inter-relationship among socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial constraints, both
within and across the pre-travel and during-travel stages of the solo travel experience.

For example, there was a connection amongst the constraints categories at the pre-travel stage. Perceptions of the social and spatial inappropriateness of solo female travel could exacerbate the women’s pre-travel, personal feelings of self-doubt and lack of confidence. This can be seen in one woman’s admittance of uncertainty about travelling to the ‘Middle East’. Her personal belief that some countries in the Middle East and Africa were dangerous was based on her anticipation that men there might not react favourably to females travelling alone. This led to her not choosing these regions for solo travel:

‘If I’m travelling as a woman by myself, there’re probably a lot of places that I wouldn’t go (spatial). Like, I don’t know, I wouldn’t travel through Africa. I wouldn’t travel through, say, the Middle East or something like that just because their cultures are different (socio-cultural; spatial) … in the Middle East, men consider women something as different (socio-cultural), and I don’t know how I might cope (personal)’ (A, 30).

Further inter-linkages can be seen in another woman’s story as she struggled with a pre-travel lack of self confidence, which in turn led her to believe that she would be spatially restricted in where she could safely go:

‘At the time I went away, my career was in neutral and my tolerance levels to work, friends, family, my country in general were extremely low. My own self-confidence was pretty shocking as well, and I knew this was holding me back in both my work and personal life (personal). ... I had this one thing that I really always wanted to do and that was to drive myself through certain areas of the US, mainly the South West, and I always had this impression, oh I can’t do that on my own as a woman, by my own self (personal; spatial)’ (S, 32).

Inter-linkages among constraints were also revealed while the women were physically experiencing their solo travel. In-situ spatial constraints such as a feeling of restricted freedom were often linked with socio-cultural attitudes regarding women travelling alone, as well as the women’s own personal
constructions of what was considered to be safe for solo females. A relevant example of this can be seen in one woman’s reflection on her travels through rural villages in Vanuatu:

‘I think it’s probably more acceptable for men to travel alone, in general ... and men can do a heck of a lot more things, you know (socio-cultural; personal). Go places alone and go places at night alone and cultural things, like go to a remote village (spatial; practical; socio-cultural). There were times when I didn’t do things that I really thought would be dumb if I did (personal), like be invited to somebody’s village in the middle of the night (spatial)’ (C, 45).

A further level of connectedness was evident across the two stages of the travel experiences. For example, the women’s pre-travel fears and doubts could carry over into the travel experience itself, leading them to express doubts about where they could venture safely. The inter-related nature of these results suggests that, when studying human experience, it is necessary to transcend simple categorisations of constraints into discrete and unconnected groupings. Based on the present results, it appears that a holistic, complex and interactive relationship is more appropriate for understanding people’s (and especially women’s) experience of different types of constraints (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993a; Scott, 1991).

This study’s results show that the lines which distinguish a socio-cultural constraint from a personal, practical or spatial one are blurred rather than fixed. Furthermore, constraints have a cumulative, dynamic impact, not a hierarchical effect, as was originally suggested by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991). Constraints impacting on people’s lives, as this research has shown, do not operate in such an orderly and clear-cut fashion. Perhaps a more fitting picture for the relationship among women’s solo travel constraints is a flexible, web-like structure, where fine threads tenuously link categories and sub-categories across both stages of the solo travel experience in a myriad of ways.
7.1.2 ‘Don't Go There': The Geography of Women's Travel Fear as a Constraint

While the results of the women’s stories show that constraints are interwoven, it was also evident that there were some predominant factors that informed the women’s sense and actuality of access. For example, fear emerged as a predominant constraint on the women’s access to, and participation in, solo travel. Reiterating the point just made in the previous section, this fear was not just a personal constraint, however, as it was often linked to the socio-cultural context, and most often enacted in the spatial arena. Again, this underscores the blurred nature of the constraint categories, and reinforces the importance of linking personal, self-related constraints to the social and cultural contexts in which they are enacted (Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993a,b; Little, 2002).

Furthermore, these findings support arguments made in the new/cultural geographies which claim that spaces and places are social as well as physical constructions, shaped by the complex gendered, cultural, racial and power relations that govern people and their actions (Crouch, 2000; Henderson & Frelke, 2000; Mowl & Towner, 1995; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Scraton & Watson, 1998; Women and Geography Study Group, 1997). This conception leads to spaces and places being conceived of as ‘embodied’ by people with real emotions, perceptions and sensual feelings, rather than as empty stages upon which individuals move (Crouch, 2000; Mowl & Towner, 1995).

At a precedent level, fear stemmed from the women’s own internal beliefs and perceptions about the safety of going alone, or from others’ fears regarding their solo travel plans. Pre-travel, women were consistently asked questions such as ‘will you be safe?’, ‘aren’t you afraid?’, ‘aren’t you going with a friend?’ and ‘you’re going alone?’. Such questions reveal a discourse that solo travel for females is somehow dangerous, aberrant and inappropriate. During travel, the women were constrained by fears relating to the negotiation of unfamiliar cultures, as well as by concerns that as solo females travelling alone, they were more vulnerable and open to sexual harassment. Many of the women were aware
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and cognisant of the role and impact of fear in their lives and solo travels, and were open to speaking about it. For those who did not speak directly of fear (or who may have been reluctant to do so), elements of fear were still covertly evident in their descriptions and in the strategies that they used to stay safe. Many of these findings resonate directly with the results of Gibson and Jordan’s (1998a,b) studies of American and British solo female travellers, who voiced similar concerns and perceptions of constraint related to harassment, safety and restricted movement.

As feminist/cultural geographers and leisure researchers have found, there are gendered inequities in terms of how men and women use, perceive and access public and places (see Aitchison, 1999; Carr, 1998, 2001; Curson & Kitts, 2000; Hanmer & Saunders, 1984; Koskela, 1997; Massey, 1994; Mehta & Bondi, 1999; Mowl & Towner, 1995; Pain, 1991; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Sheffield, 1995; Valentine, 1989, 1992; Whyte & Shaw, 1994). This body of research purports that women feel more constrained in their freedom to use public space, particularly because of a perception of fear regarding potential violent or sexual attack at the hands of unfamiliar males (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984; Scraton & Watson, 1998). In addition, research has shown that many public and tourist landscapes are ‘masculinised’ and built for the movement and enjoyment of men, at the exclusion and isolation of women (Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 1996).

In their Sheffield, UK, study of women’s leisure, Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987) found that women were reluctant to go into many public spaces alone, such as cinemas, pubs and other city areas, for fear of attack by men. Similarly, in her study of Milton Keynes women in the UK, Deem (1986) found that using public transport alone was also frightening for women, again related to a fear of sexual attack. A study by Whyte and Shaw (1994) of female Canadian university students found that the fear of violence reduced their levels of participation in and enjoyment of leisure. Furthermore, areas like public and national parks and forested areas are particularly perceived by women as ‘landscapes of fear’ (Curson & Kitts, 2000), due to their isolated and remote nature. There also seems
to be a notable fear associated with going out alone at night, therefore women are also limited temporally in their use of public space (Koskela, 1997; Valentine, 1989; Whyte & Shaw, 1994). It is for these reasons that women often feel significantly more concerned about their personal safety than do men (Pain, 1991) and more ‘socially controlled’ in their leisure participation (Woodward & Green, 1988).

While much of women’s fear of violence and sexual attack is based on perception, there are well-founded reasons for why women feel fearful when going out alone. Around the world, women continue to be the primary victims of rape and sexual attack (World Health Organisation, 2002). In Australia alone, the overwhelming majority of victims of sexual assault are female (86%), and furthermore, women are nearly four times more likely to experience violence by a man than by a woman (ABS, 1996). Similar trends are apparent in other developed nations like the United States (National Institute of Justice, 2000) and Canada (Whyte & Shaw, 1994).

Given such statistics, it is not surprising perhaps that findings by both Green, Hebron & Woodward (1987) and Deem (1986) show that women often feel more comfortable undertaking leisure activities in or around the vicinity of their homes. Yet this point raises an interesting paradox in that other research reveals that men actually report more physical attacks than do women, although this could be related to the fact that women often do not report crimes against them (Pain, 1991). Furthermore, women are more likely to experience sexual violence within their own homes and at the hands of someone they know than they are out in public and at the hands of a stranger (ABS, 2002b; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1992; Whyte & Shaw, 1994). A study of women’s use of public space by Mehta and Bondi’s (1999) revealed that, despite the fact that only one of the sixty-nine women they interviewed had been sexually assaulted, the majority continued to live with a pervasive sense of fear and continued to anticipate sexual violence when alone in public spaces. Directly relevant to the current study, a survey of international solo women travellers by Kelley (1992) found that while 77% of respondents noted feeling unsafe when travelling solo, only 14% had actually
experienced incidences of sexual harassment. Such findings demonstrate that often, women’s fear of male violence in public and tourist settings is disproportionately related to actual experience of it.

The potential threat and fear of male violence, whether founded in the reality of statistics or not, was enough to constrain and limit aspects of these forty women’s solo travel experiences. Valentine’s (1989) notion of a ‘geography of women’s fear’ is a useful framework within which to examine the constraining role of fear on women’s solo travel. By a geography of women’s fear, Valentine (1989; p. 385) means that “the association of male violence with certain environmental contexts has a profound effect on many women’s use of space”. It was evident that a ‘geography of women’s travel fear’ was ever present for these solo women travellers, manifesting itself in a number of overt and covert ways through the women’s own personal fear, others’ fear and fear of sexual harassment. Whether consciously or unconsciously, these fears were based predominantly on an association of male violence and harassment with women travelling alone.

Moreover, the women developed ‘cognitive maps’ (Caesar, 1999) of which countries around the globe would be safe and secure for solo females. By and large, and whether a generalisation or not, Muslim, Hindu and Latino cultures were perceived by these women as the most constraining and challenging for solo female tourists, because of their association with the social control and harassment of women. As a result of their fears and vulnerabilities, these women perceived, experienced and used their tourist landscapes and spatial environments differently from how they thought male travellers would. In essence, the geography of women’s travel fear worked to perpetuate the notion that solo travel in (certain) destinations abroad was somehow unsafe and, at certain times and in certain places, inappropriate.

Often the object of the male gaze in tourist spaces, these women described a sense of fear and constraint regarding the safety and appropriateness of their movement. As sexed bodies moving through gendered tourism settings and spaces, these solo women travellers found it difficult to ‘blend in’ and adopt the stance of **flaneur**.
The ‘flaneur’, as he is traditionally conceived, is the ‘objective sightseer’ (usually male) who may wander through streets and cities as a distant, removed and largely unnoticed observer (Wearing & Wearing, 1996). This conception does not appear to fit the stories of the solo women travellers interviewed in this study, nor in other studies of women who travel alone (Jordan & Gibson, 2000). The women I spoke with were generally aware of their sex, their bodies, their hair colour and their height, and how these bodily representations might have been perceived by local people and other tourists. Being consistently represented as the ‘solo Western female’, and under the attentive eye of the (male) gaze, they were often not able to blend in to the landscapes of their destinations or to enjoy an objective role in their movements and travels. In many cases, being the object of the gaze proved to be a source of frustration and constraint, leading to feelings of fear and a perceptible lack of safety.

7.1.2.1 Sources of the Geography of Women’s Travel Fear

While it was clearly apparent that fear existed, the sources of the women’s fear were less obvious. Similarities, however, can be found with previous research which indicates the foundations of women’s geography of fear. Valentine (1992) claims that women learn about the gendered divisions of space, images of fear and the geography of male violence through a variety of sources, including the media, society and the ideology of the family. According to Valentine, messages of fear are introduced into women’s mental landscapes at an early age. Subtle or more overt messages from family and society warn girls and women about not going places alone, to fear strangers and the night, and to stay in or around the safety sphere of home. As a result, argues Valentine (1992; p. 23-24), women are shaped to “perceive the home (private sphere) as a haven of safety and refuge and to associate the public world where the behaviour of strangers is unpredictable with male violence”. In many ways, these messages connote a false and fraudulent image of fear considering that most violence towards women occurs in their own homes (Greer, 1999; Valentine, 1992). According to Greer (1999; p. 355), women are socially and culturally taught to be fearful and careful, so that
the patriarchal social order may control women’s spatial freedoms and movements:

Female fearfulness is a cultural construct, instituted and maintained by both men and women in the interests of the dominant, male group. The myth of female victimhood is emphasized in order to keep women under control, so that they plan their activities, remain in view, tell where they are going, how they are getting there, when they will be home.

A cursory review of some of the government travel websites in Western countries like Australia, Canada and the USA reveals that the act of women travelling alone is constructed as an unsafe activity. For example, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) includes a document on its website entitled ‘Tips for Women Travellers’ (www.dfat.gov.au). This document is aimed at Australian women planning to travel overseas alone, and is filled with a list of prescriptive ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’. Advice for women includes statements such as: “In some societies, men may take advantage of you if you have no obvious protector. … You could unwittingly find yourself in danger simply by accepting an invitation to go out with a man alone”. DFAT also advises against certain activities for women travelling alone:

Hitch-hiking is extremely risky – there are very few, if any, places left in the world where hitch-hiking is safe for women. … Don’t get into train carriage compartments where you would be the only passenger – attackers are known to target women alone in trains.

In a 1999 report titled ‘Her Own Way: Advice for the Woman Traveller’, Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca) states that:

Everyone knows that, when travelling, a woman must be extra vigilant in terms of safety and security. What steps can she take to avoid possible sexual harassment? How can she make her hotel room secure? … Consider investing in a self-defence course designed for women. You’ll embark on your journey with added confidence.
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Women’s travel guidebooks, while espousing the autonomy and freedom of the contemporary solo female traveller, also perpetuate in their writings a notion that solo travel for women is shrouded with peril, challenge and harassment (Caesar, 1999; Glotfelty, 1996; Gilmartin, 1997). While travel guidebooks and websites directly aimed at women are useful in their negotiation of different cultures and places, at the same time they are couched in a discourse of warning, guardedness and fear.

In addition to women’s travel advice, sources for the geography of fear also stemmed from reactions by significant others to the women’s solo travel plans. Some women reported how work colleagues, friends, partners and children told them they were alternatively ‘crazy’, ‘stupid’ or ‘brave’ for going solo. Several women also noted their friends’ and families’ general nervousness and reserve about their solo travel plans and desires. This fear from others seemed to stem from a general concern for women doing things on their own, because they might be prey to attack. The demographic table provided in Appendix J indicates that many of the women interviewed lived alone, raised children as single mothers and conducted their leisure activities alone. They were accustomed to being self-reliant and undertaking everyday activities on their own, without the aid or assistance of others. Because of this, they were surprised to learn of others’ fear-based reactions. One woman told of how she struggled internally with her own fears about the safety of solo travel while trying to justify her choices and decisions to others:

‘Oh, yes, many people I spoke to said, “you’re doing what?” or “you’re going where? My God, aren’t you frightened?” … And, “won’t you feel unsafe?” … And then you’d sort of find yourself justifying why … and feeling that maybe you were a little bit silly to be going places alone’ (A, 58).

Both men and women displayed their concerns about these women travelling alone, but the concern manifested itself in different ways. As a generalisation, female acquaintances reacted by saying how they did not think they would be able to do such a thing, or commented on their ‘bravery’, whereas men seemed concerned with protecting the women from harm from other males. One woman
recounted a story about the reactions that she received from another woman about taking regular lone walks on the beach:

‘I used to walk down the beach on my own, and quite a deserted beach ... and I just loved going down there, and I remember this [woman] saying to me, “I’d never go for a walk down the beach on my own”. She was scared. And I was floored! ... See, some people are never on their own. I know some women that have never been on their own’ (M, 49).

Through expressing surprise at M’s actions, this other woman was unwittingly reflecting and enforcing a societal message that such solo leisure activities were unsafe and unwise for females. Moreover, this type of reaction underscores the perceived connection between women in isolated spaces and potential for incidences of sexual violence (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984; Sheffield, 1995; Valentine, 1989).

Reactions from men were slightly different, but shared the same fear. Women spoke of reactions by fathers, uncles, boyfriends and male friends regarding their solo travel plans. One woman found that a male acquaintance became particularly worried about her plans to travel alone, and suggested that she take a gun: ‘A man once offered me a gun to take, supposedly to protect myself. But I have never handled a gun and don’t have a licence. I said, “I’m not taking a gun”. ... I think it brought up lots of things for men in terms of a female travelling on her own.’ (A, 52). Another told how her new partner was displeased upon learning of previous solo travels she had made throughout India and Australia: ‘Well, he was absolutely horrified ... he just thought a woman shouldn’t do that, she could get raped and killed and bashed’ (E, 62). Such reactions, which stem no doubt from genuine concern, also perpetuate the geography of fear that associates women travelling alone away from home with danger.

The geography of women’s travel fear was further emphasised in the travel tales of other solo women’s experiences. A number of women struggled to avoid ‘taking on board’ these negative stories of what happened to other women who had gone, or were currently going, solo. These actual experiences by other
women travellers generated images of fear in the women’s minds, creating personal doubts about going solo to certain destinations:

‘So many of the stories I listened to very patiently but I tried not to take them on board. Because they were scary stories about women’ (A, 45).

‘In South America, you’d come across women who’d travelled on their own and had been held up with machetes and one woman who’d been raped and you hear all those sort of awful stories and that plagues your mind - well it did for me, anyway’ (R, 30).

‘People did tell a few scary stories about women here and there travelling in India, so there was a bit of fear’ (M, 49).

While these stories made an impression and resonated with the women travellers prior to their departures, they made conscious efforts to negotiate the resulting impact on their choices and actions. As noted in Chapter 5, they embraced their fears and found ways to focus on the positive stories they had heard about other women’s solo travel experiences. Yet the geography of the women’s travel fear was not just based on perceptions, as many women spoke directly of actual and very real experiences with male violence and sexual harassment while they were travelling.

### 7.1.2.2 The Impact of Sexual Harassment

Obviously, not all contact with men was of a sexual nature or could be defined as harassment, but the sexual focus of much of the men’s attention warrants discussion and deconstruction. The nature of the women’s reported harassment varied, ranging from ‘annoying’ lewd comments by men through to more physical and ‘sexual’ experiences of being touched on their breasts or other parts of their bodies.

It is interesting to reflect that many of the women interviewed did not actually use the word ‘harassment’ to describe such experiences. However, through examining definitions of what ‘sexual harassment’ actually means, it appears that much of what the women were experiencing could indeed be described as such.
Sexual harassment has been defined by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia as “an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, and where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances” (HREOC, 1996; p. 9). In almost all of the women’s stories, the sexual comments aimed at them were unwelcome and unwanted, and exacerbated existing feelings of fear, vulnerability and intimidation. They were uncomfortable and sometimes powerless under the sexualised male gaze which, according to the women, constructed Western solo female travellers as ‘loose’ and ‘sexually available’.

It should be noted that a few women spoke of deliberately seeking out romantic or sexual relationships with men during their travels, emulating to some degree Wickens’ (2002) and Jordan’s (1998) typology of the solo female traveller as a ‘Shirley Valentine’, or Dahles’ (2002) picture of the Western woman in search of the romanticised ‘Other’ in the form of ‘gigolo’ or ‘beach boy’. The important factor in these small number of cases, however, is that the women consented to these interactions, romances and sexual encounters; indeed, one woman noted the empowerment and sexual freedom she found while travelling alone (K, 31). The differentiating factor here is that the women had the choice and power to take part in romantic or sexual relationships, or to play out particular sexualised or flirtatious roles. They did not choose, nor feel empowered, by sexual harassment, which was unpleasant, unwelcome and in some cases of a distinctly threatening and violent nature.

An overriding theme running through the women’s experiences of sexual harassment was that they themselves were ‘to blame’. There seemed to be an effort on the part of several women to defend the men’s actions, putting it down to the reality of cultural and gendered differences between ‘East’ and ‘West’:

‘It’s the b-grade movies that get shown ... white women look like they’re very available’
(A, 52).
‘When I saw the behaviour of some of the tourists, I can understand why - anybody would confuse the signals ... a lot of the Western women are just as at fault. It's not just the Indian men’ (A, 45).

When victims of petty crimes or harassment, several women blamed themselves for being ‘in the wrong place at the wrong time’, or for doing something behaviourally inappropriate which might construe a misleading message to men. One woman described her admitted ‘silliness’ when travelling alone through Jamaica: ‘I found accommodation in a part of Kingston ... and I thought I'd go for a walk from here to the beach ... a fellow behind came and grabbed my arms and I was actually cut on the arm and then he slashed my bum belt and off he ran. ... I was really silly to have been in that part of the town’ (J, 55). For the woman who was raped on an isolated beach while travelling solo, she scolded herself for ‘not trusting her instincts’ about the safety of the place.

Thus many women saw it as their responsibility to avoid ‘dangerous’ places and spaces where they might be prone to attack. This meant that they were constrained in the nature of their activities and the sphere in which these activities could be undertaken. As one woman said: ‘I try not to put myself in dangerous situations – I’m very aware that you are very vulnerable as a single woman in a foreign country, so I consciously don’t sort of hitchhike on my own, or do things like that’ (A, 49). Another reaction was to admit to doing ‘silly’ or ‘unsafe’ things in their previous solo travels, like hitchhike alone or walk around at night, and then in retrospect regretting those actions for their supposed ‘foolhardiness’ and ‘stupidity’:

‘I think I was positively foolhardy in some circumstances without any appreciation that I was. And so wouldn’t do those things again, even though no harm came to me, you know, but I sort of realised later that that was probably pretty dumb, you know, what I did’ (C, 45).

‘I know I definitely travel a lot safer now, I look after myself more, I wouldn’t do as many risky things as I used to do, like hitchhike and things like that’ (K, 31).
‘I made the mistake of hitchhiking one time by myself and that was pretty bad. But I
would never, ever do that again. It was just really, really stupid but, you know, you
learn from your mistakes’ (A, 30).

Even though they had dealt with these situations well and no harm had come to
them, there was still an underlying theme of having to justify and explain their
actions. According to Koskela (1997), such is the influence of the social
production of fear that even when women have successfully dealt with what are
perceived to be ‘risky’ situations, they feel that they have done something wrong,
and that they should have been more afraid. In blaming themselves or other
women travellers for harassment, the onus rests and remains on women not to
incite male attention and to assume responsibility for their actions (Valentine,

As was demonstrated in Chapter 5, the solo women travellers used a number of
coping strategies to try and deflect harassment and to stay safe. The main
strategies were to modify their dress, fit to local norms of behaviour, remain
aware or remove themselves from the place in which they felt constrained. But it
seems that by avoiding activities and dangerous places, and by using strategies to
modify their behaviour, the responsibility again rests with the women.
Furthermore, while fear as a constraint may not necessarily have stopped these
women from travelling, having to constantly gauge the tourist landscape and
strategise accordingly did reduce their abilities to experience spontaneity and
enjoyment in their solo travels. In this sense, negotiation strategies may also be
viewed as constraints. This has been noted in previous research by Valentine
(1989; p. 386) who claims that:

Every day most women in western societies negotiate public space alone. Many of
their apparently ‘taken for granted’ choices of routes and destinations are in fact the
product of ‘coping strategies’ women adopt to stay safe. … By adopting such defensive
tactics, women are pressurised into a restricted use and occupation of public space.

As one woman reported, having to be constantly ‘on guard’ to male attention was
something she resented and found exhausting: ‘I get really resentful, thinking, why
should I have to feel like this? Why do I have to feel that somebody could get me? Why can’t I relax, you know?’ (J, 27). For another woman, the fear was a bodily, tangible feeling from which she could never retreat: ‘I was pretty scared moving around [in Indonesia] so as soon as I got somewhere that was nice, I stayed. But, you know, the scariness of dealing with the men never went away. It was with me all the time … I just got very vulnerable and I didn’t know how to get out of that vulnerability’ (M2, 49).

In blaming themselves or other solo female travellers for the harassment experienced, the onus never lies with the men who perpetrate it. Sexual harassment by males in whatever country is, according to feminist researchers, reflective of a wider patriarchal system in which male concerns dominate and in which male power serves to control women’s lives and ensure a masculinised environment (Pain, 1991; Rose et al., 1997; Sheffield, 1995; Valentine, 1989). The potential threat or actual experience of harassment and attack tell solo women travellers that they should stay away or stay at home, and that their bodies are not meant to be in certain places (Hottola, 2002).

A patriarchal system of control dictates, through producing and enforcing the geography of fear, women’s ‘appropriate’ use of tourist spaces and places. Women solo travellers accommodate by doing what is ‘safe’, ‘right’ and ‘sensible’ and by keeping themselves out of harm’s way. As such, it is not just men who reinforce the geography of women’s travel fear; it is the solo women travellers themselves. In reflecting on her solo travels, one woman directed a word of warning to other potential female tourists: ‘I would not recommend to any woman to travel on her own through Indonesia without warning her first. Be on guard the whole time. You will get harassed wherever you go. Wherever. You’ll probably get followed’ (P, 42). In this one statement, this woman has portrayed a clear warning of danger to other potential female travellers: watch out, be prepared, stand guard and remain ever aware.

It should be noted that the women’s reactions to fear and risk of harassment were not homogenous. As there is no essentialist ‘female’ travel experience (Kiewa,
1995), nor one way in which tourists perceive risk when travelling (Lepp & Gibson, 2003), there is additionally no singular way in which women responded to their constraints. Some women were merely amused or annoyed when coming in contact with comments from men of a sexual nature: ‘It wasn’t that I felt uncomfortable – I felt it more annoying’ (P, 54). Others chose to see it as simply ‘harmless’. As shown in the model in Chapter 6, a woman’s individual perceptions of a constraint such as harassment depended on the place, culture and religion in which she was travelling, as well as her own mechanisms for coping, her attitudes and her previous travel experience. Furthermore, these constraints were experienced at different levels of intensity, based on women’s personalities and attitudes, ability to use strategies, level of confidence and assertiveness, and level of past travel experience.

The women interviewed in this study revealed the pervasive role of fear in constraining aspects of their lives and solo travel experiences. These results support previous leisure research which shows that women place safety and fear as important determinants of their leisure and travel activities (Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Westwood, Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Whyte & Shaw, 1994). Based on the women’s words and perceptions, there was evidence of a gendered division of travel activities, where they were subtly (and not so subtly) told they should not hitchhike, walk alone in rural or village areas, be alone outside at night or do anything that might be misconstrued as a sexual advance. While the women demonstrated varying attitudes towards constraints like fear and harassment, their impact on their solo travel experiences cannot be denied. Yet these women did travel, despite their fears and despite their concerns of harassment. This was dependent on the women’s ability and willingness to negotiate.

7.2 Beyond the Barriers: Women Negotiating Constraint

“It is possible to live with an eye to delight rather than to domination”

Marilyn French

(‘Beyond Power’, 1980; p. 542)
CHAPTER 7: Discussion

For the forty women interviewed, constraints were evident and manifested under four broad arenas: socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial. While constraint played a large role in the description of the women’s lives and solo travel experiences, they formed only part of this experience. Constraints are not the sole definers of women’s experience; they are merely one component of women’s wider lives and journeys. Thus, through a multi-layered process of negotiation, these women were able to access, continue and enjoy their solo travels. Through the negotiation responses and strategies outlined in Chapter 5 (‘Negotiation’), these women were clearly displaying a ‘proactive response’ to their constraints (Jackson, Crawford & Godbey, 1993), rather than passively accepting limitation and restraint.

From a grounded analysis of the women’s solo travel stories, three key negotiation responses emerged: ‘access’, ‘withdraw’ and ‘continue’. When faced with precedent constraints, one response was to ensure access to solo travel. Access was achieved by using a combination of strategies such as positive determination, prioritising for travel, self-focussing, embracing fears and planning and preparing. Another response to precedent constraints was to withdraw from the solo travel experience, which reflected the women’s decisions to reduce their engagement in travel. Women withdrew by choosing to postpone solo travel until a future date, by deciding to share travel with other people or to discontinue solo travel entirely. Withdrawal did not necessarily mean that the women were entirely finished with solo travel, or that they were passively accepting constraint. Rather, withdrawal reflected the women’s diverse lives and changing responsibilities, and their need to ‘opt out’ for a period to re-assess their lives at home or to re-engage with other important commitments of family, friends, study and work.

When confronted by in-situ constraints during the solo travel experience, the women utilised a number of coping mechanisms to ensure they could continue their journeys. Such mechanisms were to adapt to cultural mores and norms, modify dress and behaviour, use self-protection strategies, join others or exit a country/destination. These in-situ coping mechanisms were both conscious and deliberate, as well as spontaneous and learned ‘on the spot’.
Elements of the negotiation strategies used by the solo women travellers are similar to those reported in previous leisure and travel research. For example, Hubbard and Mannell (2001) showed that employees negotiated recreation through strategies of time management, skill acquisition, interpersonal co-ordination and financial management. For these women, time and financial management were demonstrated in the women’s stories of how they planned for long periods of time away from work, and of how they budgeted and saved as part of their ‘positive determination’ to travel solo. Skills were acquired pre-travel through the learning of languages, and during travel through learning new mechanisms to improve interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds and to stay safe. Interpersonal co-ordination could be seen in the women’s efforts to link up with others when constraints such as fear and male harassment became too difficult to handle on their own.

Research by Jackson and Rucks (1995) suggests that people negotiate their constraints by using both cognitive and behavioural strategies, or a combination of both, depending on the situation at hand. For the women in this study, cognitive strategies were evident in the women’s positive outlook on life, their ability to put themselves as priorities and their attitude to fear. Behavioural coping mechanisms were revealed in the women’s efforts to modify their behaviour and adapt to cultural norms, in their joining up with other travellers and in their practical strategies to keep safe. Cognitive strategies seemed to be more prevalent in the pre-travel stage, as women prepared themselves mentally for their solo travels. Behavioural strategies were more common as the women were physically travelling alone and learning how to deal with different destinations’ cultural, social and geographical landscapes.

There are also similarities in terms of the negotiation strategies employed by the women solo travellers and those used by other female leisure recreationists. For instance, Little’s (2002) study of women negotiating adventure-based recreation found that participants strategised through constraints by using techniques such as being self-aware and positive, prioritising through making space for adventure in their lives and compromising through substituting desired adventure activities.
with alternative ones. Henderson and Bialeschki’s (1993b) findings from a study of women negotiating constraints to physical recreation showed that negotiation revolved around fitting in physical leisure activity around the needs of others, particularly family. Similar to these two studies’ findings, the solo women travellers interviewed also negotiated access to solo travel by relying on a positive and determined mindset, by prioritising their lives for travel and by putting their dreams first and foremost. As with other women, when withdrawing from solo travel for a period, the women in this study compromised by anticipating future travels or by dedicating themselves for a time to study, work and family commitments at home.

There is very little research available on tourists’ negotiation strategies with which to compare the present results, and even less on the coping strategies of women who travel alone. However, Westerhausen (1997) found that female backpackers used strikingly similar tactics to negotiate as those used by the women interviewed in this study. In Westerhausen’s research, the female backpackers made use of techniques such as joining male travellers for protection, as well as cognitive strategies like projecting a self-assured and confident attitude. Gibson and Jordan’s (1998a, b) and Elsrud’s (2001) research highlighted that the solo women travellers they interviewed took calculated risks in their travels to ensure they stayed safe while at the same time experiencing novelty and fun. The similarity of these authors’ results with the findings of this study indicate a general commonality in the way that women travellers negotiate their constraints.

### 7.2.1 Structure and Agency: Women as Active Individuals

While it was evident that the women interviewed in this study were constrained by a lack of resources, fear and social roles, these constraints did not singularly control their movements nor entirely foreclose their ability to access solo travel. While there were times that many of the women succumbed to others’ priorities or were restricted in their choices, they chose not to see themselves as victims within society. Rather, their stories were full of descriptions of how they were able to
take control and play a part in determining the course of their lives. Consistently, the women interviewed demonstrated the willingness and determination necessary to overcome their constraints.

In using the ‘access’ and ‘continue’ routes of negotiation, these forty solo women travellers demonstrated an ability to find power within potentially disempowering circumstances, uprooting traditional notions of ‘woman as constrained’. Such a finding resonates with current feminist and socio-psychological research, which has turned its attention from the confining aspects of women’s constraints to the power of negotiation (Shaw, 1994). Through a negotiation lens, women leisure seekers and travellers are reconstructed as active agents and individuals, able to manage their challenges rather than passively accept constraint and limitation (Henderson, 2000; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993b; Henderson et al., 1995; Little, 2000, 2002; Wearing & Wearing, 1998).

At the heart of the solo women travellers’ ability to negotiate is the concept of human agency. Agency refers to the ability of individuals and collectives to garner power and demonstrate action under the influence of the social, political and gendered structures which govern the operation of societies. Often, ‘agency’ is thought of in direct opposition to ‘structure’. The so-called ‘agency-structure’ dichotomy has been the subject of considerable discussion among social theorists, psychologists and feminist researchers (see Bandura, 1997; Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998; Blumer, 1969; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1980; McNay, 2000; Rojek, 1995). At the centre of this debate lies the question of whether human action is entirely dictated and determined by societal structures, rules and systems, or whether individuals have the power and autonomy to change these systems and live in a manner which they freely choose.

The answer to this question seems to sit somewhere in between, as the link between structure and agency has now been revealed to be more interactive and complex than dichotomous and oppositional (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998). Early sociological theorists like Durkheim (1895/1966) viewed societal structures as constraining influences, existing outside of human power and reach. Under such a guise, individuals are objectified as “social puppets” rather than as
“social actors” (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998; p. 19). These early structuralist approaches tend to conceive of class, sex, race and nationalism as immutable forces which dictate the ways which people must act and behave (Rojek, 1995). While the powerful and often constraining influence of societal structures cannot be denied (Gibson, 2001), and were indeed evidenced in the results of this study, this approach leaves little room for women and other social sub-groups to resist and overcome.

The work of French sociologist Foucault (1979, 1980) has been paramount in challenging such uni-dimensional ways of thinking about structure and power. According to Foucault, power has a more capillary and dispersive effect on individuals, rather than a corporeal and sovereign influence. As such, power is not something that one group has and that another group lacks (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Rather, power is a technique or action which can be exercised in a multitude of ways depending on the circumstances at hand. From Foucault’s (1980) post-structuralist point of view, power should not be thought of only as repressive, as it can also be an empowering and motivating force. Foucault discusses two different kinds of power: ‘power from’ or ‘power to’. While structures can and do exert power on individuals (power from), those individuals can also engage in the powerful act of resisting such structures (power to). Furthermore, power is never static and one-way, nor always held in the hands of one particular individual or collective party. According to Foucault, power is more of an ever-shifting and dynamic force and, as a result, certain individuals and groups of people will always have the relative freedom to move within their structures.

Poststructuralist sociologists and feminists have found inspiration in Foucault’s critiques of power. Feminist researchers themselves have been critical of Marxist/radical feminist thinking which posits that all women are oppressed and powerless under a capitalist, patriarchal paradigm (French, 1985; hooks [sic], 1989; Koskela, 1997; Rojek, 1995; Wearing, 1994; Wearing & Wearing, 1988). While women’s oppression around the world has not entirely dissipated, and women remain disproportionately victim to crimes of sexual harassment and rape,
positioning society and patriarchy only as constraining and domineering means that women remain construed as victims. Along these lines of thinking, there is little choice and recourse available for women to resist, to improve their lives or to access leisure. Looking beyond structure, however, feminists have utilised Foucault’s philosophies on power to reposition women as embodied and dynamic individuals, able to make their own life choices and decisions (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; DeVeaux, 1994; Green, 1998; McNay, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 1988).

Wearing and Wearing (1988; p. 120) offered an analogy of “squashed ants” to describe a phenomenon whereby researchers rely on the ‘powerless victim’ scenario to describe women’s experiences of leisure. In response to this thinking, Wearing and Wearing suggest a shift towards a more positive and inclusive emphasis on woman as powerful and resistant individuals. It is through an agency lens that we hear stories of women resisting gendered constraints, fighting oppression and discrimination and being empowered in disempowering circumstances (Goodnow, 1985). Goodnow (1985; p. 28) states that a focus on women as active agents taking control of their lives is more appropriate and inclusive than women being constructed merely as objects and victims:

It is wearying to find oneself [as a woman] described endlessly as a victim and as an object acted upon rather than acting … it [is] encouraging, then, to see a shift towards documentation about the way women have coped with difficulty or have exercised power.

For the women in this study, the constraining structures of social expectation, gendered constructions of appropriate female behaviour and cultural restriction were indeed evident in their solo travel stories, yet they found ways to cope, negotiate and take control of their lives. Through strategies such as positive determination and self-focus, the women portrayed themselves as independent and active agents in determining the course of their lives, rather than as passive victims of circumstance.
Based on the women’s interviews, however, it is also apparent that there is a need to move beyond simplifications of agency as ‘good’ and structure as ‘bad’. While many of the women openly acknowledged their constraints and limitations, they also recognised the value of structure and boundary in grounding society and everyday life. As one interviewed woman noted:

‘In everyday life, you are restricted. You have to get up, you have to go to work, so much is expected of you - you have to be responsible, completely responsible, because that’s what’s expected of you. … But that’s good. Society wouldn’t exist without that’ (D, 57).

Two recent studies by Raymore (2002) and Shogan (2002) advocate a shift in thinking from constraints as wholly negative and limiting towards consideration of their positive, enabling aspects. Shogan (2002) argues that rather than constraints being conceptualised as entirely restraining, they can be reconceptualised as providing the necessary boundaries in which life and leisure take place. She also contends that without constraint and boundary, there would be no recourse for action within those boundaries. Raymore (2002) posits the idea of ‘facilitators’, or factors which, in conjunction with constraints, enable people to negotiate and participate. By extension, and relevant to the present study, without constraints on their lives and solo travels, there would have been no opportunity or need for these women to negotiate.

Indeed, it is primarily through overcoming challenge and constraint through solo travel that these women found the sense of independence, self-confidence and control which they sought. As one younger woman traveller reflected in her travel writings:

‘Travelling through other countries in which I do not speak the language brought to the surface skills I didn’t know I had which I had to rely on to get by … I achieved personal growth through overcoming challenges, and increased independence and confidence. I think especially because I was by myself, I became so self-reliant’ (H, 19).
7.2.2 Solo Travel as Resistance

The quotes and stories from Chapter 5 demonstrate that these solo women travellers were active and powerful individuals, finding ways and using strategies to negotiate their constraints. In exercising their personal power and negotiating their challenges, it was also evident that these women were using solo travel as a means of resistance. As Foucault (1979) has pointed out, only where there is power can there be resistance. Resistance here refers to an individual’s or collective’s ability to oppose and reject dominant discourses, ideologies and structures which limit their freedoms (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Dionigi, 2002; Foucault, 1979).

From a feminist viewpoint, resistance is a particularly important issue in the study of women’s experience. Linked with concepts of agency, power and negotiation, women’s resistance to male-domination, gendered structures and sexualised spaces have shown that women can “often resist men’s control, developing their own forms of power and means of struggle” (Thorne, 1982; p. 14). Leisure itself has been viewed as a potential site of resistance for women (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Green, 1998; Little, 2000; Shaw, 2001; Wearing, 1998, 1990) and for people with disabilities (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001) and the elderly (Dionigi, 2002). Certain types of leisure activities (adventure, outdoor recreation, competitive sport) can provide ‘heterotopias’ (Wearing & Wearing, 1996), or spaces where women can recreate or resist the roles and media images of woman as ‘mother’, ‘wife’, ‘carer’ and ‘frail female’. As a result of their resistance and negotiation, research has shown that women feel empowered and develop an increased sense of identity, self-determination and autonomy (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Dionigi, 2002; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Green, 1998; Little, 1997).

Elements of individual resistance to constraint and dominant gendered structures were evident in the solo women travellers’ stories. From the women’s reports of constraint in Chapter 4 (‘Constraints’), it was clear to see that they still struggled with traditional expectations that they be responsible for others’ care and needs. When asked about what solo travel meant for them, the overwhelming word used
was ‘freedom’. They were not simply talking about freedom from work and everyday life, although this was indeed a motivating force. Like other tourists, these women did seek to escape the norms and everyday world of life at home. But escape on its own is too simplistic a description of their motivations. What these women were speaking of was freedom from the care of others and from woman’s expected life path as wife, mother, carer and responsible female. Through the process of leaving home, travelling solo and having to make their own decisions, these women found ways to resist these societal norms and step outside the boundaries of what they thought was expected.

For the women who were partnered or who had children in their care, solo travel also provided a space and time in which they could be free (if only temporarily) from having to minister to others’ needs and requirements. It should be noted that these women did not resent or deliberately resist being mothers, partners and wives, as these were roles in life that provided them with joy, balance and inspiration. Nor were they attempting, via travel, to fully escape these roles, as they recognised their responsibility to care for those they loved, and the joy that came from such duties. What they did resist, however, was being associated only with these roles (Freyssinger & Flannery, 1992; Little, 1997). These women wanted to be viewed as something other than wife, mother and partner. Solo travel provided a time and space where women could escape these multitudinous roles and domestic responsibilities; a heterotopia where the women could reinvent and refresh themselves, ‘selfishly’ (as they put it) indulging in their own needs and priorities. As one single mother of two said: ‘[Travel] gives me freedom to do what I want and not have to worry about others’ (A, 45). Other mothers similarly relished the chance to make their own decisions and, for a time, not be responsible for their children’s needs:

‘When you travel – particularly on your own – it’s the total sense of freedom and you can be completely uninhibited. ... You’ve got the freedom to wake up in the morning and decide on the course of action. You don’t have to be anything. Just be yourself – totally – complete freedom to do whatever. You find yourself - you get a lot of confidence’ (D, 57).
CHAPTER 7: Discussion

‘With having five children, you're on call and, I mean, you nearly bend over backwards 
I suppose in that sort of flexibility ... I wanted to be able to choose where I wanted to 
go, when I wanted to go, anytime of day or night ... without having to consider anyone 
else. You're not having to share it [solo travel] with anyone else and whatever growth 
there is, is yours. Travel’s something I wanted to do on my own. I don’t want to be 
beholden to anybody’ (P, 54).

Resistance was not only evident for married women and those who were mothers. 
A number of the single women interviewed very consciously resisted societal 
pressure to conform, have children and get married. Solo travel seemed to make it 
easier to delay these traditional milestones. As one forty-year old woman 
commented: ‘Solo travel is a chance to step outside parameters of expected way 
of living – education, car, career, kids’ (D, 40). A woman in her sixties who had 
never married found that continual travel and life abroad provided her with a 
reason for delaying and resisting societal expectation: ‘I had the usual Western 
hang-ups – I wasn’t married, I was 40 ... and I didn’t have children, and I didn’t 
have my own property, so I wasn’t seen as a settled person, and you do get a lot of 
criticism thrown by people’ (C, 62). For this woman, life and travel in foreign 
cultures provided a space where she was not limited to the traditional descriptors 
of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’: ‘I think the major benefit was to realise that in foreign 
cultures, people don’t know how you’re received in your own culture ... they don’t 
know about those hang-ups, and they don’t know how to see those hang-ups in 
you’.

Through solo travel, young single women found a space where they felt free to ‘be 
themselves’, and where they could resist others’ perceptions and expectations 
regarding their roles for the future. One woman saw that travel allowed her a 
chance to retreat from her community’s expectations of who she was: ‘Everyone 
knows you in a certain way here [at home] ... the expectations of everyone else. 
... They know me as, “J...’s this way and that way”. When I travel, I like that I 
do n’t have to be answerable to anyone - no expectations’ (J, 31). For the woman 
of Greek descent, solo travel allowed her to escape the strict binds of family and 
assert a growing need for independence and self-reliance: ‘Because my parents 
are really quite strict, by the time I was 23 I just wanted to get out and leave home
and travelling really let me be able to do what I wanted to do without having to explain it. ... I really wasn’t able to, you know, assert my independence until I was travelling, by myself’ (M, 31).

A younger woman in her mid twenties also consciously utilised solo travel as a method of resisting the pull of societal expectation: ‘I was turning 25, I’d better study and better do this and that, better start to think about - do I want to get married and have children and all this sort of thing, and how incompatible that perhaps is with travelling. ... Travel is about developing an inner conviction to live life my way, that often goes against what our society expects’ (A, 25).

Through their stories of negotiation, it was also apparent that some women were resisting notions of themselves as dependent on others for their mental and physical security. The theme of ‘doing it on my own’ came through strongly in almost all of the forty women’s stories. Many of the women were adamant that they were independent and autonomous beings, and solo travel fit neatly into this discourse of independence. What solo travel allowed was an opportunity to take control, to make one’s own decisions and rely upon one’s own skills. Generally speaking, most women pictured themselves as positive, independent and self-reliant beings, not dependent on others.

‘I know it’s an amazing life and I did it for myself. Nobody gave it to me, or even helped me along. I planned for travel, paid and just did it, on my own’ (D, 40).

‘I think travelling on my own [was a benefit], because I was ... responsible for my own decisions ... I was my total own free agent’ (A, 45).

Most of the women travelled alone by choice, relishing the autonomy, spontaneity and freedom that solo travel allowed. As two women noted: ‘I like the independence of it, and not having to worry about what somebody else is doing. ... I like making my own choices’ (J, 27). ‘If I wanna do nothing for the day, I can. I don’t have to please anybody else, I don’t have to think, well, they really wanna go, and I should do this. ... If I just want to spontaneously get up and go somewhere, I don’t think, oh, are they ready to do that?’ (A, 49).
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In addition to resisting societal expectations, gendered roles and others’ perceptions, the women interviewed demonstrated a level of resistance to the ‘geography of fear’ discussed earlier. As described previously, fear was a predominant influence on the women’s solo travel experiences. But therein lies a dissonance: the women were fearful, yet they still travelled solo. Clearly, the feelings of fear were not powerful enough to foreclose entirely the women’s participation in travel. Whyte and Shaw’s (1994) research on the role of fear in female university students’ participation in leisure showed similar results. While fear was indeed a constraint on their freedoms to access and use public space, it did not result in the non-participation of activities.

Some women, when asked about fears associated with solo travel, refuted notions that ‘home’ was safe and ‘away’ was not. Collectively, there seemed to be an attitude that crime and violence could happen just as easily at home as it could in overseas destinations, showing the women’s choice to resist their fears: ‘I mean, you could wander all over India for six months and then come home and get hit by a bus and die, couldn’t you? Doesn’t matter where you are’ (P, 64). ‘I would rather end up having a travel experience and risk being killed than not having travelled. … Not that I would want to be killed, stabbed or raped! But these possibilities do not stop me travelling – they could happen to me here [at home]’ (A, 52). ‘I think you do miss out on things if you’re always afraid, if you don’t want to do something different. … If you’re gonna hide behind your doors the rest of your life and not do anything’ (A, mid 50s).

As such quotes demonstrate, many women were aware and conscious of their fear, but did not want to dwell on it. In some cases, there was a resistance and reluctance to discuss fear, but this may have been the result of the women not wanting to portray themselves as doing anything dangerous or risky. If solo travel continues to be constructed as unsafe for females, then it becomes yet another activity ‘off limits’, reinforcing again the inappropriateness of solo travel for women. Foster and Mills (2002) discuss how Victorian women travel writers refused to mention fear at all in their travelogues, in pure defiance to society’s
expectation that they would not be able to cope. It seems that these contemporary solo women travellers may have adopted a similar stance to their historical counterparts; by using a positive mindset and refusing to dwell on their fear, they were making a statement to society that it is acceptable for women to travel alone. Again, they are refuting the geography of women’s travel fear.

In addition to resisting structures imposed on the women at home, there was also evidence of resistance to gendered constructions of ‘appropriate’ female behaviour at the destinations they were visiting. Indeed, the very act of them travelling as solo females was seen as resistance to traditional gendered roles in some of the male dominated cultures they visited. It seemed their very presence as solitary women upset certain cultural and religious orders. Resistance was further demonstrated in stories where women continued to occupy travel spaces and places that were considered ‘off-limits’ to solo females, or where they refused to fabricate stories about being married. Thus there was a kind of ‘double resistance’ when women travelled solo: they were resisting the constructed inappropriateness of leaving home, but at the same time resisting the patriarchal order of other societies which dictated that same inappropriateness regarding women travelling on their own. As such, women had to continually negotiate and resist at both levels to be able to access travel and continue their journeys.

One of the strongest comments on resistance to fear and constraint can be seen in the account of the woman who was raped while travelling solo in her twenties. While the rape was devastating, and its impacts have been long-term, she refused to allow this act of male control push her into a spiral of fear, subordination and vulnerability. Still scared, traumatised and feeling vulnerable following the incident, J. resisted and made the choice to continue with her travels. By making this choice, she found power in acutely disempowering circumstances, refusing to follow male-defined notions of what is spatially appropriate for women:

‘I still went travelling ... it was still part of my adventure - it made me a very real person. ... I was thinking “I’ve just worked my arse off for two and a half years to get myself here, and I’m not letting these bastards ruin my trip”. ... Everyone knew how
While there is evidence of resistance, this does not mean that all of the women were consciously travelling solo as a way of transgressing dominant societal and gendered structures. Many of them did not recognise their acts and strategies of negotiation as resistance, nor were they necessarily trying to make an overt feminist statement through the act of travelling solo. As Shaw (2001) and Dionigi (2002) have conveyed in their research, individuals’ resistance can occur along a continuum of ‘intentional’ to ‘conscious’. Whether the solo women travellers had intent to resist is not the important point here. What is important is that a theme of resistance, autonomy and independence was clearly evident in the women’s statements, demonstrating the power of their individual agency. Furthermore, while stories of resistance centred on what each of the women did individually, these individual acts also reveal a collective resistance of women against dominant ideologies and male domination. As a group, whether conscious of it or not, women were making a statement about non-conformance that carried beyond their individual actions (Shaw, 2001). Utilising the freedoms and possibilities of solo travel, individual women showed how ‘women’ as a collective can resist societal expectation, gendered appropriations of female behaviour and male controlled use of space. These solo women travellers challenge a masculinised version and domination of public space, a statement of resistance which has been noted in other studies of women’s travel (Davidson, 2001; Foster & Mills, 2002; Gibson, 2001; Warner-Smith, 2000).

Through their solo travel, these forty women were taking part in a most independent and mobile form of leisure. This act does not sit comfortably with the ‘stationary woman’ (Eichler, 1980), nor with the woman who must upkeep the ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan, 1982). Resistance to the ethic of care seemed particularly important for women in the later life stages, who were raised in Australia in eras where their role in life was to get married, have children, stay at home and support husbands (Summers, 1975). Through solo travel, these women were released (even if only temporarily) from the confines of gendered
expectation and domestic responsibility. In essence, the very act of women travelling alone is troubling to patriarchal societies, because it takes women as far away as it is possible from the duties of home, responsibility and care (Massey, 1994).

It was also shown that younger women similarly felt the pull of conformity and societal expectation, though in today’s era their solo travel may have been considered somewhat more socially acceptable. Travel was viewed as perhaps the last opportunity for independence and autonomy before ‘settling down’, taking on the tiered role of carer and becoming part of a ‘responsible’ society. Some of the younger women anticipated that their future lives would be dominated by caring for others, and independent travel was viewed as one chance to resist this future. This shows that while the gendered expectations of women’s roles may have altered over the decades, resistance to such expectations was apparent at all ages and stages of life.

### 7.2.3 Empowerment as an Outcome

Through a combined and interlinking process of negotiation of constraint, dealing with the challenge of solo travel and resistance to societal expectations, these women reported a sense of empowerment and benefited from solo travel in a myriad of ways. Whitmore (cited in Hutchison & McGill, 1992; p. 134) defines empowerment as “…an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live”. While this study did not explicitly set out to describe the benefits or changes as a result of solo travel, analysis of the women’s interviews demonstrates the prevalence of empowerment, confidence and increased self-control as specific outcomes of negotiating solo travel. As one woman reflected, a sense of empowerment was noted during the solo travel experience, as she negotiated her challenges and constraints, made her own choices and controlled her own actions:
'It was very empowering, on every single level ... the fact that I would make my own decisions. You know, I had to make some fairly full-on choices, even the choices like what countries I would go to, you know ... It's such a security with inside yourself as well, like I'm okay, I'm surviving, I'm okay, I'm having a great time, I made these decisions myself. I've got that control over my whole destiny’ (J, 31).

For other women, a sense of empowerment was reported in that solo travel provided a time and space for personal growth and identity-development:

‘My travel experiences have been the greatest learning and growing periods of my life. A large part of my identity has developed through these experiences. Qualities I developed when travelling, particularly alone, represent most who I am: independent, adventurous, bold, tolerant and humane’ (H, 19).

‘[Solo travel’s] about getting to know yourself ... good things and bad, you know, your weaknesses and your strengths. Sometimes you need to do that sort of trip to even get to those places in yourself: ...’ (M, 38).

‘The travel helped me to understand myself more. ... It really taught me to a bit more confident in my own decisions, so I’ve really had to rely on myself a lot, you know, and I realised that I love independence, like, I’m really independent’ (J, 31).

Several women also spoke of being able to effect change in their personal and professional lives at home as a result of their negotiation of solo travel constraints and experiences. For example, one woman attributed a newfound sense of self-confidence and assertiveness to her ability to travel alone through India: ‘Before I went travelling, I was timid about some things. I wouldn’t say what I really thought. ... I think a lot of women don’t know how to say no, whereas I just outrightly go ‘no!’... So it’s taught me to say yes and no very clearly’ (J, 27). Another woman noted that travelling solo helped her to overcome her shyness and lack of self-esteem, factors which transferred into her everyday life at home and allowed her to make positive changes in her career path:

‘I came back and I really pushed to get change for my career path. I was very pushy, which wasn’t me, and insisted that I be given an opportunity to try something else, and
I got what I wanted. ... I got into an environment where I was speaking in front of
people on a regular basis, training, giving presentations to leadership teams and quite
senior people in the bank. For a shy, nervous person this was big stuff. ... I couldn’t
imagine myself doing what I did before I’d gone away – just the level of confidence was
not there to try’ (S, 32).

The positive and therapeutic benefits for women which result from participation in
outdoor and physical recreation activities have been explored in a leisure studies
context (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Dionigi, 2002; Henderson, 1996c; Mitten,
1992; Little, 1997; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000), but only a limited number of
authors have commented on the empowering abilities of independent or solo
forms of travel (see Butler, 1995; Gibson & Jordan, 1998a,b; Hall & Kinnaird,
1994; McArthur, 1999; Riley, 1988; Warner-Smith, 2000; Wearing & Wearing,
1996). Few of these studies, however, have been empirical in nature. Exceptions
include Riley’s (1988) study of American budget travellers, in which she found
that women reported an increase in feelings of independence and self-control
related to their ability to travel independently. Gibson and Jordan (1998a,b)
similarly found that solo travel provided their British and American sample of
female tourists with a sense of freedom, empowerment and confidence. McArthur
(1999) also reported that the Canadian solo women travellers she interviewed felt
more confident, empowered and stronger in their sense of self as a result of their
journeys. The findings of this research on Australian solo women travellers are
thus supported by these North American and European studies, and obvious
similarities can be drawn in terms of benefits gained.

Furthermore, few studies of tourism (exceptions include Bruner, 1991; Fisher &
have explicitly examined how travel can lead to individuals’ empowerment,
transformation and increased well-being, and, as was stated previously, even
fewer studies have examined the empowering role of independent travel for
women. Thus further research in this area is clearly warranted. It is unclear
whether other types of travel (ecotourism, adventure, business etc.) would effect
similar feelings of resistance and empowerment, but the independent nature of
solo travel seems to heighten the women’s sense of self-control, autonomy and
self-efficacy. While limited in their depth, the quotes shown above at least indicate the unique role that solo travel can play in the empowerment and self-development of women. What these results reveal is not only the types of benefits and outcomes that women can gain through solo travel, but the interconnectedness between travel and women’s everyday lives at home (McCabe, 2002; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000).

7.3 Women and Solo Travel: A ‘Journey of Her Own’ or a ‘Relative Escape’?

The women interviewed in this study live in a world where a multitude of choices and freedoms are available. Today, in many Western societies at least, women can access multiple locations and destinations, have a legislative right to freedom and are provided with the opportunities to travel. The results of this study have shown that solo travel provided these forty women with a ‘heterotopia’ - a time, place and space in which they could access renewal of self and freedom from the confines and expectations of home (Gibson, 2001; Warner-Smith, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 1996). Through participation in solo travel, there was also evidence that these women could transcend and resist dominant structures, constraints and gendered ideologies which dictate the (seemingly) unsafe and inappropriate nature of women going solo. As a result of this process of negotiation and resistance, they found a sense of autonomy, empowerment and self-determination. Through solo travel these women have accessed a ‘journey of their own’: a journey that truly belongs to them, in which many benefits and opportunities are available, and where they are solely responsible for their own decisions, actions and positive futures.

To this point, what has been emphasised is the women’s individual ability in negotiating and resisting their constraints, and the individual factors (motives, attitudes and previous experience) which impact on the constraints-negotiation process. This focus has been important in that it constructs these solo women travellers as powerful and self-determined agents, rather than as passive acceptors
of constraint. Through their stories, it was evident that these women defined themselves as in charge of and responsible for their own destinies and positive solo travel experiences. Resonating with Bandura’s (1997) idea of self-efficacy, these women could and did exert influence over their lives and actions. As Mowl and Towner (1995) have espoused, our ability to access opportunity and negotiate constraint is relative to who we are and what we are, but this does not address the social or gendered overlays which, as the present findings indicate, may pose an even greater influence on how an individual can access those opportunities and choices.

Furthermore, a sole focus on the individual means that responsibility rests entirely on a woman herself to manage her constraints. While it was true that some constraints were based on the women’s own personal constructs and perceptions, the socio-cultural milieu in which the women were physically and socially located (whether at home or at the destination) was often the most important determinant of constraint. As was shown earlier in this discussion chapter, the personal constraints of fear and self-doubt were often linked to societal perceptions of ‘solo’ women travellers’ abilities, or to their gendered representation in male-dominated cultures. This point is supported by Henderson and Bialeschki’s (1993; p. 406) statement that “overcoming constraints is not only the problem of individual women”. Henderson (1997; pp. 456-457) argues that a focus solely on the individual leaves no room for understanding the impact of ‘antecedent’ constraints, or those constraints that stem from the social and gendered society in which women live and which are often outside of women’s direct control:

> We [women] are socialized to ‘pull ourselves up by the bootstraps’ and to be personally responsible for our fate. Antecedent constraints, however, such as gender expectations, familial support, job segregation for women, media messages, and body image are examples of social constraints that are difficult for an individual by oneself to overcome.

Therefore, the socio-cultural and systemic contexts that govern and influence women’s lives must remain central to the study of women’s leisure and travel experiences (Henderson et al., 1996; Little, 2000, 2002; Pohl, Corrie & Patterson,
2000). If these contexts are not made central to such analyses, then women remain locked in a cycle of ‘blaming themselves’ for their constraints and feeling entirely responsible for their fate. Women’s solo travel experiences and constraints must never be divorced from the backdrop of their everyday lives, relationships and histories, in addition to the socio-cultural norms, gendered interactions and sexualised landscapes existent in the destinations they are visiting.

No doubt all tourists, male or female, solo or not, face constraints such as a lack of time for leisure, a lack of money and the practical limitations of travelling in unfamiliar cultures. Yet what was suggested by the women’s stories was that such inhibitors take on a new and unique meaning for females travelling alone. This is not because they are female as such, but because of what their female sex represents in gendered societies at home and abroad. As Shaw, Bonen and McCabe (1991; p. 299) succinctly point out, “it is not the fact of being female … per se which is the constraint, but rather the way in which this social location is experienced in society”.

As a result, this thesis argues that while women are free to travel, escape the constraints of home and enjoy the empowering and beneficial aspects of solo travel, it is really only a ‘relative escape’. This concept of a relative escape builds upon Wimbush and Talbot’s (1988) idea of women’s ‘relative freedom’ in their access to leisure. Thus a relative escape recognises that a women’s ability to access and enjoy solo travel will always be relative to the gendered, racial, social and cultural contexts which dictate how females should live and behave.

These women did not just simply travel; they negotiated travel. To have the freedom to travel, they needed to negotiate freedom from the roles, constraints and structures of home (Henderson, 1996a). For example, it was found that a lack of time or money to engage in solo travel abroad was often linked to the women’s socio-cultural roles and responsibilities, such as the primary care for children, other relatives and maintenance of the domestic realm. The social mores of the era in which women were raised also had an impact. For some of the older
women, there was evidence that they did not have the opportunity to travel solo in their youth, as it was deemed not to be socially appropriate. Subject to others’ expectations of the meaning, safety and (the seeming) irresponsibility of such an act, a number of women struggled with justifying the relevance of solo travel to themselves as well as to others, both at home and abroad.

Similarly, while travelling at the destination, it was difficult to access freedom to enjoy the benefits of solo travel without first negotiating freedom from the constraints and limitations present there. During their trips, these women were confronted with the social and cultural mores and constraints of the destinations in which they travelled, which could work to inhibit their behaviour, prevent their freedom of movement or create fear for personal safety. Constructed as solo females under a gendered, male gaze, they were never entirely free to experience the feelings of liminality and freedom so readily associated with the tourist experience (Cohen & Taylor, 1976; Krippendorf, 1997; Lett, 1983). This notion of escape from everyday life into an unreal and unattached world has been problematicised by some feminist researchers, who question to what extent women on holiday are allowed the same freedoms and liminal reprieves as men (Deem, 1986, 1996a; Ghose, 1998; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Jordan & Gibson, 2000; Massey, 1994; Pesman, 1996; Wearing & Wearing; 1996). As these researchers have argued – an argument echoed in the findings of this study - the solo female traveller can rarely experience the anonymity of the sightseeing voyeur (the flâneur) as she can never fully escape being the object of the male gaze. As discussed previously in this chapter, these forty women were ever aware of their bodies, of the impact that their sex would effect on others in different societies and of their very difference as solo Western travellers. As Morris and O’Connor (1996; p. xviii) have pointed out in this regard: “a woman cannot travel and not be aware of her body and the limitations her sex presents”. Robyn Davidson (2001; p. 9) agrees:

A woman sets out into a world whose public domain is organised by and for men. How far can she claim a freedom of action taken for granted by her male counterparts, knowing that she is always, and everywhere, potentially prey?
When the male gaze was so firmly fixed upon these solo women travellers, it was difficult for them to gaze upon others unnoticed. Again, the ability to seek true escape and liminality remains difficult, if not out of reach. As it was argued earlier in this discussion, these solo women could rarely assume the stance of the objective and distant *flaneur*, a factor which meant they were often travelling based on a ‘geography of travel fear’, rather than through a geography of liminality and freedom.

These findings further reveal that it is not appropriate to view travel for women as pure and unadulterated escape from everyday life (if it ever is for anybody). Such concepts were predominant in early analyses of tourism (eg. Cohen & Taylor, 1976; Graburn, 1983; Krippendorf, 1997; Rojek, 1993; Urry, 1990), where it was thought that travel was largely motivated by a desire to escape a dreary and ugly ‘workaday’ world. For example, Krippendorf (1997; p. 42) professes that travel “liberates us from obligations … from the regulations which oppress us in everyday life … travel is double free time: it frees people from work and from home”. Graburn (1983; p. 11) put forward a similar view, positing tourism as “a ‘modern ritual’ in which the populace gets away from it all, the ‘it all’ being ordinary workaday, mundane life, particularly work, which includes the workplace, homework, and housework”.

As discussed earlier in this thesis in Chapter 2, feminist/gender and critical theorists have already revealed the problematic nature of ‘escape’ in the context of women’s holidays. To revisit this issue in the context of this discussion, vacation time does not represent an automatic polarity to work because often the ‘ethic of care’ is still expected, especially when women are on family holidays (Deem, 1996a,b; Gilligan, 1982). Clearly the solo women travellers interviewed for this study did not have their partners or children with them while they travelled, but the ethic of care and pull of societal expectation could still constrain their access to travel and affect the timing and length of their journeys. While a need for escape did inform many of these women’s motives for solo travel, everyday life was not miraculously suspended when they departed for travel. Their travel was
always tied to their contexts and constraints of everyday life at home, and then compounded by the contexts and constraints at the destinations they visited. To reiterate, solo travel for these women was indeed a ‘journey of their own’, but at the same time it is always a ‘relative escape’.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has focussed on a discussion of the results presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, highlighting similarities and differences with previous studies of leisure and travel. The findings demonstrate that, similar to women participating in other leisure activities and travel types, these solo female travellers are also constrained by ideologies of gender, societal expectation and personal feelings of doubt and fear. The ‘geography of women’s travel fear’ was emphasised as a particularly constraining feature of solo women’s touristic experiences, especially in relation to their spatial freedoms and movements at the tourist destination.

Also evident from the women’s experiences, and supportive of other studies, was the inter-related nature of their socio-cultural, personal, practical and spatial constraints. It is clear that no single constraint must be negotiated before others become apparent, as a more cumulative and holistic impact was apparent. However, the socio-cultural contexts and structures both at home and abroad were shown to be central determinants of constraint, supporting previous feminist research which emphasises that women’s experience must never be divorced from the broader socio-cultural milieu.

Yet these women can and did go ‘beyond their barriers’, showing their active agency through finding ways to negotiate and overcome their constraints. Linking with the concept of negotiation, solo travel was also discussed as a site of resistance, freedom and (to a lesser degree) empowerment for these forty women. Through solo travel, there was evidence of women transgressing and crossing the boundaries of the structures and roles which influenced their life paths and constructed what was ‘appropriate’. In these ways, the women found an
autonomous and self-determining journey of their own. At the same time, however, the extent to which this really was a ‘journey of their own’ was questioned and revealed to be problematic under a feminist/gendered lens. Rather, what the women experienced was more of a ‘relative escape’. Their journeys, escapes and experiences were always situated as relative to the societal expectations and perceptions of home; relative to the gendered perceptions and ideologies of the destination, and relative to the limited spatial freedoms as a result of the socially constructed geography of fear.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This exploratory study of women and solo travel set out to address four broad, but interlinking, research objectives. Reiterating from Chapter 1 (1.5: ‘Research Objectives’), these research aims focussed on exploring the role and meaning of solo travel in women’s lives, identifying and describing constraints as they impact on women’s solo travel experience, and identifying and describing how solo women travellers might negotiate or overcome those constraints. An additional objective was to determine the theoretical relevance and application of leisure constraints frameworks to the study of women’s solo travel in particular. Based on an analysis and interpretation of the results, a number of key conclusions can be drawn and these will be summarised in this final chapter. The contributions of the findings to tourism research and knowledge will be highlighted, and, given the study’s limitations, avenues for future inquiry will also be suggested.

This thesis has addressed what has been referred to as a ‘neglected dimension’ (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999) in tourism research; that is, the impact of constraints on the tourist and travel experience. While constraints have contributed to the body of leisure studies literature for a number of decades (Jackson & Scott, 1999), the investigation of their influence on tourist behaviour and participation in travel has been virtually overlooked. Studies that have explored constraints in the context of tourism have tended to focus on their role in hindering travel decision-making and purchase behaviour (Dellaert, Ettema & Lindh, 1998; Hudson, 2000; Um & Crompton, 1992). These have been useful contributions in terms of increasing the power of marketing and promotional efforts, but their ability to uncover the cultural and sociological sources of constraint remains limited.

This thesis has demonstrated that there is validity in extending and applying constraints theory to the study of the tourist experience, with particular relevance for understanding women’s travel. The results outlined in Chapter 4 reveal that constraints were indeed evident, impacting on the women’s lives, opportunities
and solo travel experiences in a myriad of interconnected ways. A constraints approach underscores the fact that tourism and travel, as with other leisure options, are not freely available to all people in the same ways. For some groups of people, travel cannot be as easily accessed or negotiated. There remain inequities in our social, political and cultural systems, and a constraints perspective goes part of the way, at least, in documenting the effect of these inequities and structural pressures. While this study has contributed to filling some of the theoretical and empirical gaps with regard to the impact of constraints on tourists’ experience, further research is needed to gauge the influence of constraints on other social sub-groups and tourist types.

That said, subsequent research on the topic of constraints and tourism/travel needs to take into consideration recent criticisms of the constraints approach, particularly those made in the leisure literature since Samdahl and Jekubovih’s (1997) seminal paper on the need to re-think constraints. One of the apparent weaknesses in previous explorations of constraints on the leisure/travel experience is the over-reliance on quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, which has resulted in relatively limited insight into the contextual reasons for the existence of constraints (Henderson, 1997; Jackson, 2000). Moving away from previous tourism studies which utilised *a priori* determinants to investigate the impact of constraint on tourist behaviour and decision-making (Hudson & Gilbert, 2000; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2002; Tian, Crompton & Witt, 1996), this current qualitative investigation used in-depth interviews to allow the women themselves to describe, in their own words and terms, their experiences of limitation and constraint. If complexity and diversity of meaning is desired, rather than a reduction or quantification of experience, it will be important that future research on travel constraints also consider interpretive paradigms and qualitative methodologies. As long as tourism constraints research continues to emphasise typologising and classifying, rather than a search for in-depth understanding and the integration of concepts, women’s (and other tourists’) real voices and experiences will remain shrouded.
Another criticism has been that structural constraints of time, money and resources have tended to dominate the literature, with little connection made to the broader socio-cultural contexts which might give rise to such constraints. As a result, there have been recent calls for a ‘broadening’ of constraints research to include more contextual and descriptive explanations for why constraints occur (Henderson, 1997; Jackson, 2000; Little, 2000; Raymore, 2002; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Shogan, 2002). Cognisant of such concerns, this study has attempted to provide a more holistic, inclusive and integrative interpretation of the impact of constraints on women’s solo travel experiences. At a broad level, the forty solo women travellers’ constraints could be categorised as being either socio-cultural, personal, practical or spatial nature. Yet further analysis of these constraints revealed their inter-connectedness, demonstrating in particular the centrality of the socio-cultural context. The evident complexity and inter-active nature of the women’s constraints indicates the importance of moving beyond purely structural/practical issues of time, money and geographical distance.

As discussed previously in Chapter 2, it is important to reiterate that it is no longer appropriate or viable to portray constraints as unconnected and isolated entities, as they were initially in models like those by Crawford and Godbey (1987) and Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991). Further, no longer can constraints be divorced from the wider social, political, cultural and gendered base from which they are borne. This is an especially pertinent point for the study of women, who still tend to be in subjugated positions in society, and, as shown in this study, whose leisure and travel experiences, are often more highly and uniquely constrained. The socio-cultural and antecedent determinants of women’s constraints have remained uncovered in previous theorisations (Henderson, 1991b; Henderson, Stalnaker & Taylor, 1988; Little, 2002), but this study, rooted in a feminist, critical and interpretive paradigm, aimed to make them more visible. As Henderson (1991b; p. 374) has lamented, “until antecedent constraints are examined, particularly for women, the focus … will only constitute a ‘band-aid’ approach to addressing the problems that people face”.

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As was demonstrated in the results and discussion chapters, the women’s spatial limitations, personal fears and practical barriers were often inextricably linked to the societal, cultural and gendered context of both home and destination. Clearly, any further research must take heed of the fact that women’s travel does not occur in a cultural, social or political vacuum, and can thus only be understood within the context of women’s broader lives (Squire, 1994). These points are reflective of recent calls for a broader and more complex definition of leisure as it is encompassed in common, everyday life (Little, 2000, 2002; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; McCabe, 2002; Moore, Cushman & Simmons, 1995). Feminist and gender-aware paradigms have focused on ‘putting the context back in’ to the study of women’s experience (Stanley, 1988). Extending Stanley’s assumption to a tourism context, then, travel experiences cannot be understood in isolation of the ‘interests, needs, skills, commitments and obligations in women’s lives’ (Stanley, 1988; p. 18).

While the results of this study confirm the ‘relative escape’ these women face when travelling solo, they did not view themselves as powerless victims. They were active agents rather than pawns of circumstance. Too often in the past, constraints have been constructed as obstacles or barriers (Jackson, 2000). Subsequently, the response has revolved around either removing obstacles to participation (e.g. access, finances, interest) or viewing constraints as insurmountable and therefore not worthy of time and effort. These tactics do little to empower individuals or illustrate their ability to take action and control.

Traditional conceptualisations of constraint as wholly confining and negative are less pertinent in a post-modern, post-structuralist research era which emphasises complexity, multiple viewpoints and dynamic societies (Little, 2002; Raymore, 2002; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Shogan, 2002; Whyte & Shaw, 1994). With regard to the present study, a description solely of constraints would not have represented a full or accurate picture of these women’s experiences without a concomitant description of how they also negotiated. The results outlined in Chapter 5 showed that while constraints and limitations were acknowledged and recognised, rather than view themselves as powerless victims, these women were
active agents in resisting dominant structures and gendered expectations. These solo women travellers could negotiate - not only to access travel, but also to enjoy participation in the travel experience itself.

The idea of negotiation re-positions women as active participants, instead of passive consumers (or non-consumers), of the tourist experience. These women decided what they wanted to do, where they wanted to go and ensured they could negotiate their constraints to do so. The findings of this study thus challenge gendered metaphors which equate men with exploration and travel, and women with home and the ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan, 1982). In this contemporary era where women have increased social advantages, leisure opportunities and spatial mobilities, no longer are women passive observers of travel, or “the fixed point to which men return” (Warner-Smith, 2000; p. 33). These forty women were active and independent consumers of travel, undertaking their journeys in a variety of countries and cultural landscapes. On this note, however, it must be stated that these women were able to travel solo not because of an absence of constraints, as some authors have intimated (Carr, 2000), but because they were able to creatively and actively negotiate. The women interviewed illustrate the enduring power and impact of constraints on their lives and travel experiences, and despite some criticism wielded at the continuing relevance of constraints research (Raymore, 2002; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997), it appears that women’s social status and access to equal opportunities have not yet reached a point where constraints can afford to be negated.

In addition to making contributions to conceptualisations of constraint, negotiation and resistance, the results of this study also implore a more complex analysis of ‘the tourist experience’. Early writings constructed the tourist as merely in search of the trivial, common, superficial and non-challenging (Turner & Ash, 1976). Tourists were connoted as ‘ugly’ and ‘stupid’ (Krippendorf, 1997), wanting only to take in as many sights and sites as possible, not caring if they were unauthentic or real (Boorstin, 1975). This type of thought does not accurately reflect the attitudes, motivations and perceptions of the solo women travellers I spoke with. As shown in the model presented in Chapter 6, the
women’s travel experiences and negotiations of constraint were influenced by their desire for challenge, self-development, independence and cross-cultural learning. These women’s perceptions of themselves as ‘travellers’ rather than as ‘tourists’ demonstrated their willingness to negotiate, and to embed themselves in the cultures and lifestyles of their destinations. Like Cohen’s (1973) non-institutionalised, unstructured tourists, these solo women valued risk, adventure and novelty. Similar to MacCannell’s (1976) thesis, these women were in search of ‘authentic’ and meaningful tourist experiences. Moving away from more traditional notions of tourism and travel, these women emulate more with Wearing and Wearing’s (1996) ‘choraster’ (an alternative to the ‘flaneur’): they did not travel merely to visit ‘places’ or to objectively ‘observe’, but to visit the people in those places, to have meaningful social interactions with them and to experience their ways of life. As chorasters, they were also well aware of their impact as Western female bodies, and what reactions their physical presence might effect in other cultures.

Evidently, further research on the complexities, meanings and dynamic nature of the tourist experience is needed in an effort to transgress simplistic and uni-dimensional interpretations. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001; p. 64) have stated that “whereas travel and tourism used to be commonly perceived as the quest for the trivial … an emergent view is that travel and tourism constitute an educative and self-formative realm of spiritual and creative significance”. Based on the findings of this study, this sample of solo women travellers appear to support a move towards this ‘new’, culturally aware, and educative type of travel/tourism (Poon, 2003; Weaver & Opperman, 2000). Rather than be boxed in to strict and bodiless categories of ‘mass’ or ‘non-institutionalised’, these women travellers reflect a more fluid and changing type of traveller, who is interested not only in development of the self, but with their impact on, and connection with, the people and societies they visit. They are embodied, gendered human beings, more interested in the search for meaning, authentic experience and lifelong learning, demonstrating a shift beyond simple, disembodied dualisms of ‘us and them’ and ‘tourist vs Other’.
The results challenge other widely touted notions of the tourist experience. Traditionally, travel has been conceived as an event or set of activities which happens when one leaves home, and finishes when one returns home (Ryan, 1997). Yet the dichotomy of ‘home’ and ‘away’ becomes much too simple a division based on an analysis of these forty solo women travellers. Elements of home and its associated social norms and expectations were carried over into the travel destination. So were the women’s individual perceptions and attitudes towards the travel experience; they could not be divorced, in either mind or body, from the ties of the places from which they originated. Conversely, while ‘away’, concerns and thoughts for home were never entirely forgotten, as women continued their care and responsibility for family, dependent parents, children and partners. Never did their roles and responsibilities entirely dissipate.

Thus, the travel experience should not simply be perceived as a linear, unidirectional process, but rather as a complex experience which is affected by the women’s lives at home, and which can, in turn, impact on women’s lives after they return. This finding resonates with Botterill and Crompton’s (1996; p. 79) argument that “the vacation [should be] returned to its place within the life of the person and not separated out as some eccentric, temporary and rather meaningless event. … Thus a study of a person’s approach to being a tourist can be illustrative of wider concerns”. Similar to espousals by feminist leisure researchers, but perhaps coming from a different perspective, Jafari (1989) has also queried the notion of travel as a complete break and escape from everyday life at home. Using the home environment as a kind of springboard from which people embark on their travels, his concept of ‘omission’ acknowledges the uninterrupted flow between home and away.

Jafari’s (1989) notion of omission shows that people are indeed ‘away from home’ while they travel, but at the same time it challenges previous research (Graburn, 1989, 1994) which suggests that one entirely leaves his or her ordinary life behind and becomes fully suspended in a liminal, non-ordinary world. While it is recognised that the solo women travellers interviewed revealed a motive for escape and that elements of liminality and freedom from constraint could be
negotiated, it could also be said that for these women, home was never entirely left behind when they travelled, and that the touristic world was rarely forgotten when they returned home. On this basis, the findings suggest that such overlaps and complexities between previously dichotomised conceptions of home and away need to be explored further in subsequent analyses of the tourist experience (Currie, 1997; Jafari, 1989).

It has been encouraging to see, over the last decade or so, a burgeoning body of ‘gender and tourism’ literature (Gibson, 2001; Hall, Swain & Kinnaird, 2003). Investigating tourism processes and experiences through a gendered, feminist lens can, ultimately, help to “offer fresh interpretations of relationships between people, places and landscapes” (Squire, 1995; p. 3). Gender/feminist researchers have taken on the challenge of broadening previous mis(conceptualisations) of tourism and the tourist experience. They also continue to re-assess how tourism ‘knowledge’ is constructed, through the use of alternative methodologies and stances. Yet gendered tourism research still represents only an ‘evolving agenda’ (Hall, Swain & Kinnaird, 2003), and much more work is required.

Pritchard and Morgan (2000; p. 118) have claimed that “at the end of the twentieth century tourism landscapes are still shaped by the discourses of patriarchy, (hetero)sexuality and racism”. Clearly, there is further scope to explore the gendered consumption and production of tourism, as we move into the twenty-first century. While we do this, however, we must refrain from merely ‘adding women’ to the study of tourism processes and tourist behaviour. It was an aim of the present thesis to acknowledge women’s voices in a field where they have largely been unheard, but these voices and experiences were continually linked back to the gendered and societal context. It is not just about ‘women and travel’, it is about the dynamic social and power ideologies which shape women’s relations to men, other women and society as a whole, and how these relations are experienced from the social location of being ‘a woman’.

From the platform of a postmodern, feminist paradigm, there is not merely one way of looking at the world (or the tourist experience), but multiple ways. As
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

such, unified and homogenised versions of the ‘female’ solo travel experience were largely avoided (Ghose, 1998; Hall & Kinnaird, 1994; Mills, 1991). As there are many kinds of ‘woman’, so there will be many experiences and cultural interpretations of solo travel abroad. The women interviewed here are dynamic beings, thus what was presented is only a snapshot in time. Their attitudes, perceptions and interpretations will continually shift and alter, as will the cultural and social landscapes of the countries through which they travel. Thus, while there was a shared essence to the women’s lives, their experiences of solo travel, and their resistance of structure, these common essences and resistances must be recognised as complex (Scraton & Watson, 1998). The model described in Chapter 6 attempted to address this complexity by illustrating the role that attitudes and perceptions, previous travel experience and travel motivations played with regard to the constraints-negotiation process.

For example, age, social era and life stage were similarly shown to bear some influence on the way in which constraints were perceived and negotiated, but these factors were not singled out as guiding research frameworks. Constraints of social expectation and societal disapproval regarding solo female travel seemed more prevalent for women raised in earlier eras, when child-rearing and domestic duties were the norm (and independent travel was not). Women interviewed in their forties fifties and sixties were able to negotiate access to travel more readily when their responsibilities to children and family were lessened. Younger women seemed more intent on proving their independence and autonomy through solo travel; a last period of freedom before succumbing to the pressures of career, children and long-term relationships. Clearly, solo travel and the need for independence and autonomy is linked to psycho-social changes and significant events in women’s lives (Nadien & Denmark, 1999; Reinke, et al., 1985), and again proves the importance of considering women’s leisure and travel experiences in the context of their lives as a whole (Deem, 1986; Freysinger, 1999). A closer examination of the impact of life-stage is required in terms of the women’s desire for, or withdrawal from, solo travel. Life-stage/life-span frameworks would provide fruitful avenues of inquiry for subsequent studies of
women, gender and travel (Collins & Tisdell, 2002; Gibson, 1996; Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002).

While important as an organising framework, sex and gender were not, and should not be, the sole defining descriptors in interpreting women’s solo travel experience. As several Western feminists now admit, gender may not always ‘be enough’ to describe the complexities and intricacies of women’s constraint and subjugation (De Vault, 1996; hooks’ [sic], 1989). The subtleties effected by individual experience, class, race and ethnicity must also be recognised in addition to gender, particularly when dealing with non-Western and minority women’s experiences of patriarchy and discrimination. Ghose (1998; p. 5) has summarised the problematic nature of researching ‘women’, by stating that “focusing on gender to the exclusion of all other determinants of subjectivity, such as race and class, … den[ies] the fragmentation of identity and collude[s] in humanism’s eternal quest for unity”. This was a study which sampled a predominantly white, Western and Australian group of women, and this may be one of its weaknesses. Additional research on the constraints and negotiation strategies faced by women travellers of other cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds would be useful in presenting a more balanced interpretation of the impact of constraints.

Hall and Kinnaird (1994; p. 200) have claimed that any study of the Western female traveller is “fogged with contradiction”, as there are so many cultural, gendered and societal layers which need to be peeled back when interpreting their experiences. Given the nature of the research objectives, this thesis has focussed its attention on the women’s perceptions of their travels, constraints and cultural interactions. In this way, the voices and perceptions of the host population remained outside the scope of the study, and thus a relatively one-sided view of the host-guest interaction was given. Cross-cultural explanations were difficult, given the wide range of countries and cultures these women visited. Future investigations of women and travel might be counterbalanced with host populations’ impressions, explanations and perceptions, and may benefit from exploring host-guest interactions in one particular country or region. Furthermore, as gendered interactions and relations are often conflated in cross-
cultural situations, particularly between ‘First World’ tourist and ‘Third World’ host (Gibson, 2001), the perspective of the host in subsequent studies will be especially important. It might also be pointed out here that all interviews with the women took place prior to the events of September 11th (2001) and the Bali bombings (2002). It is difficult to ascertain whether these recent global events would add another level of cultural complexity to the host-guest interaction, or to the constraints experienced by solo women travellers. Additional research may be able to uncover these complexities and constraints as we move into a new and somewhat restrained era of global tourism movement.

In summary, women travellers are now recognised as a growing force within the tourism industry (Bond, 1997; Matthews-Sawyer, McCullough & Myers, 2002; Slavik & Shaw, 1996; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). In Chapter 1, this trend was linked to changing social and political circumstances for Western women around the world. Within Australia specifically, women’s opportunities for education and for earning equitable incomes through employment have improved (Bryson, 1994). Furthermore, traditional ideologies of the family have shifted, so that social expectations of marriage and the production of children do not yield as much power as they did, perhaps, for women raised in previous generations (Richards, 1994). It appears, and this study has confirmed, that one of the many ways that women have been exercising their relatively recent financial and social autonomy is through solo travel.

Despite such trends, it appears that the tourism industry has been relatively slow in responding to the needs of the female travel market (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). To date, relatively little has been known about the constraints women face when travelling. For these forty women, solo travel was viewed largely as a positive, beneficial and rewarding experience, offering opportunities for self-development, reflection, social interaction, stress relief and cross-cultural learning. If women are being disenfranchised, as the results have indicated, due to constraints such as fear, harassment and reduced spatial freedoms, then a substantial market and social sub-group is being forgotten.
It is not the intention of this thesis, however, to suggest that the tourism industry should aim to encourage a completely unfettered tourist experience for solo women travellers. On the contrary, the women I interviewed wanted to travel alone, wanted to experience dissonance and were keen to learn about and interact with people from cultural backgrounds different to their own. In fact, these were chiefly the reasons why they were travelling solo in the first place. Removing the challenge and difference is thus not the intent, as these are factors which are viewed as an essential part of the solo travel experience. As one woman succinctly summed up: ‘you can’t separate the constraints and challenges from the experience of solo travel’ (A, 52).

The goal, then, would be to allow women to know what challenges they are taking, and make them aware of the support structures that are available and easily accessible. This would then enable them to seek out the information they need to best manage the potential constraints that may prevent access to, or reduce enjoyment of, the travel experience. Leiper (2003; p. 292) has recently argued that “[the tourist experience] should not be too closely managed, for then it loses spontaneity, loses some of its intrinsic value. One of the distinctive arts in tourism management is sensing that boundary”. The future of tourism constraints research lies in ‘sensing that boundary’, understanding the power of negotiation and acknowledging people’s ability to take control of their own lives and destinies.


REFERENCES


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REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE
APPENDICES

Name/age of interviewee: ____________________________________
Date of interview:________________________
Place of interview:________________________
Time commenced interview:________________________
Found interviewee through: ___________________________________
Interview #:_____

DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

WOMEN AND SOLO TRAVEL

PRE-INTERVIEW

A little about me and my travel experiences
About the research: how did I come about this topic? What I will do at the end of research? Why is it important for women?
Summary of results

* refers to questions which must be asked of all interviewees

Background Information/Travel history

♦ " Brief life history
  - Where born and raised?
  - Family?
  - Places lived?
  - Current life situation - study, work, family, relationship etc.

♦ " Places travelled? Overseas and Australia.
♦ How many trips in total?
♦ What interested you about these places?
♦ " How much of this travel is done on your own specifically?
♦ Describe generally, if possible, what you do when you travel? Any style/routine you like to follow?
♦ Any preparation before travel?

Motivations/Benefits

♦ " Overall, what has motivated you to do this kind of travel?
♦ " Why do you choose to travel alone?
♦ " What benefits does travel provide for you?
  - Emotional?
  - Physical?
  - Spiritual?
  - Other?
♦ What is important to you when you travel? What do you really want to achieve/do?
♦ When you think of the word ‘travel’, what does it mean for you? What words?
♦ Who or what has inspired you to travel? Any role models?
Constraints/Challenges

♦ * I want to ask about constraints and challenges related to independent travel?
  - Before travel?
  - During travel?
♦ * Challenges related to being a female traveller?
♦ * How do you deal with these challenges?

Gender

♦ * What kinds of reactions do you get from your family/friends/work colleagues about travelling alone?
♦ * What kinds of reactions do you get from locals in the places that you are visiting?
♦ * What's your general perception of women, like yourself, who travel alone? Any words that come to mind?
♦ Q. FOR WOMEN WHO'VE TRAVELLED WITH MEN: Are there any differences in how men and women travel?

Returning home

♦ * What has it been like to return home from your travels?
  - Difficulty/ease of adjusting – dependent on what factors? (eg. had a job to come back to)
  - What kind of impact has the travel you've done had on your life at home?

Other

♦ * How do you 'fit' travel into your life?
  - flexible employment?
  - leave work?
  - leave a relationship?
  - delay career/family/relationship?
  - Others?
♦ * What kind/s of travel information have you used? Ever guidebooks for women?
♦ Do you keep a travel journal? Why?
♦ * Do you feel satisfied with the independent travel experiences you have had? Anything that you would do differently?
♦ * Will you continue to travel independently? – Future plans?
♦ * Any last remaining thoughts/words?
♦ * ANY QUESTIONS YOU WOULD HAVE LIKED ME TO EXPLORE?

THANKYOU!

Time finished interview:_____________

CONTACT DETAILS:

Mail
Address:_____________________________________________________________

Email:_________________________________

Phone:________________________________/Mobile:_______________________

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX B
MEDIA RELEASE
(GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY)
Media Release

Research shows travel as journey of discovery for women

A self-confessed global travel addict, Griffith University PhD student Erica Wilson is delving into the experiences of other like-minded women.

“I believe independent travel is an important part of many women’s lives,” said Erica, who embarked upon her first international jaunt at the tender age of six months when her parents moved from the United States to Townsville.

Now studying at Griffith’s School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Erica is well into a three-year study on Australian women and their independent and solo travel experiences.

Interviews to date have focussed on women’s travel stories – their motivations, benefits and challenges – with results showing that travel is seen as a meaningful, learning experience which impacts on all aspects of women’s lives.

“The learning experience is not just about women understanding other cultures and ways of life, though this is important, but about understanding themselves,” Erica said.

Preliminary results of Erica’s study showed that confidence, safety and harassment were primary issues for women travellers but these “constraints” were being dealt with so women could continue their journeys.

Benefits of travel were based on an “inner” journey of self-development, such as learning about oneself and having a new perspective on life, she said.

Erica also stressed the importance of her research for the tourism industry. Female tourists had been identified as a new growth market segment, she said, and tourism marketers and operators should be aware of the needs and wants of women travellers.

Erica is looking for other intrepid women of all ages to partake in interviews. To participate in this research, phone (07) **** ****.
APPENDIX C
NEWSPAPER STORY
Call for women who like to rove

AFTER a life spent shuttling between Seattle, Mexico and Queensland, it is no surprise to find that Erica Wilson is interested in travel.

But while the Griffith University student has postcards and memories of her own, she is seeking to tap into tales of like-minded women as part of her PhD research.

She wants to know what motivates women to travel on their own and the ways in which travel has contributed to their lives.

"I looked at historical accounts of women travellers but found there was a lack of writing about contemporary travel experience," she said.

Erica is interested in women who have travelled on their own in at least one overseas country. Age is not important but she is particularly keen to speak to women over 40 who have travelled once commitments to children and careers are no longer paramount.

"I am interested in why women choose to go the places they do, what challenges they face and the emotional benefits they might gain from seeing other cultures," she said.

By DEIRDRE SMITH

Preliminary results of Erica's study showed that safety and harassment were on initial concern for women travellers but these issues were dealt with along the way.

"The experience is not just about women understanding other cultures and ways of life, but about understanding themselves," said Erica.

Subjects will take part in a taped interview lasting about an hour.

Questions will cover issues such as how travel is integrated into relationships, returning home and reactions of people to the decision to travel alone.

"The culture shock can be worse coming home than going," she said. "For many women travel is a life-changing experience".

To date, Erica's subjects have ranged from 20-year-olds without a care in the world to 'adventurous grandmothers'. There was even one woman who found that the charms of domestic life had started to pall and pawned her wedding ring to fund her travels.

Women who would like to contribute to this research can call Erica on 5552 8864.

Gold Coast Sun, 24/04/01
FINALLY, ATTENTION SOLO AUSSIE WOMEN TRAVELLERS -- Wanted for PhD study. Journeywoman Erica Wilson is a PhD candidate at Griffith University (Australia) studying the experiences of independent female travellers. She believes independent travel is an important part of many women's lives, and she is looking for other intrepid Australian women of all ages to partake in interviews. Any Aussie women who want to participate can call (07) 5552 8364 or e-mail: Erica.Wilson@mailbox.gu.edu.au.

Journeywoman.com, May 2001
APPENDIX E
BACKGROUND INFORMATION LETTER
(INTERVIEW REQUEST)
Dear ____________.

Thank you for your interest in participating in my PhD research at Griffith University on women’s solo travel experiences. This research is about you: your experiences of life and travel are central to this study. While stories about your past travel experiences will assist me in the completion of a PhD, I would also hope that you find the interview process interesting and enjoyable, as you reflect on your travels. You may also be interested in finding out how your stories were utilised within the final thesis, and what other women had to say about their travel experiences, so I will be happy to provide you with a summary of results of the study once it is completed.

I would like to explain more about the nature of the research, the types of questions I will be exploring with you, and how your recollections of travel will be incorporated into the PhD thesis. This information should help you to start thinking about your travel experiences, what they have meant for you, and the sorts of things you might like to discuss during the taped interview. The aim of this study is to find out what independent travel means for women, in the context of their lives. I also have a particular research interest in women who travel alone. I am conducting in-depth interviews with Australian women of all ages, and it is these interviews which will provide the majority of data for the study. The only criteria for possible interviewees are that 1) you are Australian, or living in Australia, 2) you have travelled alone at some stage of your adult life (but not including tour group travel, business travel or short trips to visit friends and family) and 3) you have visited at least one overseas country.

It is not just the destinations that you visited which I will be focussing on, but the whole journey: what you did before you travelled, what it was like when you were there and what happened when you returned home. The major areas of questioning will be: your travel ‘history’; the motivations for, and benefits of, travel (and of travelling alone); the ‘constraints’, or challenges, of independent travel; the influence of gender on the travel experience; what it’s like to return home, and how you fit travel into your life overall.

You will be assured of confidentiality in your responses throughout the interview, and the results will be used only for the purposes of this research and possibly for published academic articles after the completion of my PhD. With your permission, certain quotes

Erica Wilson
PhD Candidate
School of Tourism and Hotel Management
Griffith University
PMB50, Gold Coast Mail Centre, QLD, 9726
[insert phone/fax/email]

[insert date]
direct from your interview may be used throughout the text of the thesis. Following the quote will be your initials and age (eg. A, 52), so that your name will not be used in whole throughout any part of the thesis. I will also remove others’ names that you might mention, as well as any other information that you feel you would rather not have in print. Please find the attached confidentiality agreement, and bring this signed and dated if we do meet for an interview.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to talking with you soon. If you are interested, we will arrange an interview time and place at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

[SIGN HERE]

Erica Wilson
APPENDIX F
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM
(INTERVIEW)
WOMEN AND SOLO TRAVEL STUDY

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Some of the information you will provide in the interview may lead to readers becoming aware of your identity. To ensure your confidentiality, your name, and the names of others who you may mention in the interview, will not be referred to in whole within the text of the thesis; only your initials and age will be used (eg, A, 52). The names of others will be deleted. Please also know that you are under no pressure to divulge any information you feel uncomfortable with sharing. It is at your discretion what you want to tell me, and what you want taped. The tape recorder can be turned off at any time during the interview.

Please indicate below which statement you are more comfortable with by ticking in the appropriate bracket:

1. ( ) YES, I understand that quotes from my interview will be used in the thesis, but that my confidentiality in this study is assured. My name and the names of others I mention will be removed, I will be referred to in the text of the thesis as only my initials and age. I am satisfied with these arrangements to ensure my anonymity.

OR

2. ( ) NO, I do not want other people to identify me through the quotes used in the thesis. I do not want my initials or age to be used, and would like all identifying names, places and events removed from the thesis.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding the study or your anonymity within the research, please contact me on (07) **** **** (work) or **** *** *** (mobile). Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Please bring this form with you to our interview or, if we are conducting the interview by phone, send it back to me in the supplied reply-paid envelope.

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: _____________________________________

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE: _______________________________

DATE: ________________
APPENDICES

APPENDIX G
POST-INTERVIEW NOTES
(PRO-FORMA)
PARTICIPANTS’ INITIALS: ________________________________

DATE: ____________________

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:

DESCRIBE SETTING:

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT INTERVIEW:
PARTICIPANT’S REACTION TO STUDY/INTEREST IN STUDY:

PERCEPTION OF PARTICIPANT:

MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS OF INTERVIEW (HOW SIMILAR/ DIFFERENT TO OTHERS)?
APPENDIX H
FOLLOW UP LETTER & REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Dear [Participant's Name],

I just wanted to say thank you for participating in the interview in [date] for my research on women and solo travel. Since our interview, I have heard many other interesting and inspiring stories of travel with several more women who agreed to take part in the study. Your time, interest and openness in our conversations were greatly appreciated. You spoke not only of your travels, but of your life, and I thank you for trusting me with what was sometimes very personal information. Please find attached a transcription of your interview, which is for you to keep. I have done my best to represent the interview exactly as it was but apologise for certain words or phrases that I couldn’t hear due to various reasons such as background noise or a low voice.

I hope you enjoyed the interview experience as much as I did. Many of the women I interviewed expressed a desire to find out more about the research, and were keen to hear what other women said. At this stage it is too early to give a succinct account of the results of the research, though I will inform you of the key findings by mail towards the end of the study, if you are interested.

I now have a few final requests from the women participating in this study which will help further the understanding of women and their travel experiences. Your help with these requests will be much appreciated, and I hope these tasks might be personally rewarding for you. I realise that you are very busy, so please don’t rush with this. Now that you have had some time after the interview to reflect on what travel means to you, I would like to follow up on some of the points raised in our conversations.

1) The first request is the completion of a short survey (see attached) which will enable me to get further important demographic information about you and your travels that I may have missed during the interview. All this information is helpful for me in putting together a story of who you are. This part shouldn’t take too long.

2) The second request asks for you to think and write a little more about the meaning of travel for you in your life and how solo travel in particular has affected you. Perhaps there were other things you thought about after the interview? Have a read of the transcript again if you want to see what exactly you said. I thought the best way of starting this reflection process was to get you to draw up a travel timeline on a piece (or pieces!) of paper to outline the major events in your life and when they have occurred (eg. birth, study, jobs, birth of children, marriages and/or relationships, and any other events important to you in your life). On this timeline, indicate when and where you travelled – both in
Australia and Overseas. A travel ‘resume’, so to speak. If you don’t know exact
dates, then give approximate years. Indicate also which trips were primarily
alone, and which were primarily with family, partners or friends (this does not
include people you met up with along the way during your travels). Furthermore,
indicate generally how long each major travel trip was (ie, 2 weeks, 1 year etc.).
Ultimately, this timeline will help me to put your travels into the context of the rest
of your life. Please explain if any of your travels were spurred on by major life
events. While I do have some of this information on tape, a complete picture will
make this information much easier for me to understand.

In addition to this timeline I wanted to ask if you could write down a little bit more
about travel and what it means for you in your life. You may have thought about
additional things after our interview. Just write as little or as much as you like.
However, I would like to direct your writings to the following four questions (some
will be relevant, others may not be):

1. What has travel, and solo travel in particular, meant for you in your life?
   (What words or images come to mind to best describe your travel
   experiences)
2. What needs are met for you through travel?
3. What would you say are the greatest benefits and challenges of independent
   travel?
4. What are your future dreams and aspirations with regard to travel and life?

You may also want to supply other writings, information or documents relating to
your life or travel experiences. For example, some women spoke of journals they
wrote to record their travels. Read through those journals if you like, or any other
records of your travels, and if you feel in the mood write down some of these
thoughts and feelings experienced while you were travelling. You may like to
quote directly from things you wrote, be it from a journal or a photo album -
perhaps you even want to quote a song or poem that best expresses how you felt
about certain places and people. Attach all of this additional information and
writing to your timeline.

Please know that any information you supply will be confidential and of great use
to this study. I would like to use some of the writings you supply as quotes
throughout the thesis – if there is something too personal that you don’t want to
show up in the thesis, let me know. I realise that I am asking for more of your
time and energy, so only do what you feel like doing. If you have any questions
regarding the survey, timeline or what to write, don’t hesitate to give me a call on
(07) **** **** (work hours) or email me at [insert email address]. Please send
your survey, timeline and additional writings back to me in the reply-paid
envelope at your own convenience.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you
[SIGN HERE]

Erica Wilson
(enc.)
APPENDIX I
FOLLOW UP SURVEY
FOLLOW UP SURVEY

WOMEN AND SOLO TRAVEL

[Please note: If you are uncomfortable with any of these questions, please leave them aside]

a) Demographic information

What year were you born? ___________________
Where were you born? ______________________

Currently, are you (please tick one box):
☐ Single
☐ Long-term relationship (live together)
☐ Long-term relationship (live separately)
☐ Married
☐ Divorced
☐ Separated
☐ Widowed
☐ Other? _________________________

Do you have children?
☐ No
☐ Yes (how many?) ________________
     (what ages?) ________________

What is your highest level of education?
________________________________

Any other courses/certificates? ___________________________________________

What is your current occupation?
________________________________

b) Life

What would you say are your current major interests in life?
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

________________________________
What would you describe as your major life achievements?
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

**c) Travel**

Do you speak a language other than English?
- No
- Yes (which languages?) _______________________________________

Briefly, describe as best you can how you see yourself as a traveller (eg. what words best describe you when you travel and your philosophies on travel)
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Do you usually prefer to take short or long-term trips when you travel?
- Short (why?) ______________________________________________
- Long (why?) ______________________________________________

What type of traveller would you say you are most of the time:
- Backpacker (budget traveller)
- Backpacker (mid - high range accommodation)
- Non-backpacker (budget traveller)
- Non-backpacker (mid – high range accommodation)
- Packaged tour traveller
- Other? ____________________________________

Do you travel solo:
- By principle, and because you prefer it
- Because you can’t find somebody else to travel with
APPENDIX J
PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS (TABLE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>State or Country (Born/Raised)</th>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Places Travelled Solo (adult; outside Australia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, United Kingdom, South Africa, Central Africa, Seychelles, Vanuatu, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>single (partner)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>postgraduate</td>
<td>South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>New Zealand, Western Europe, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Samoa, Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>1 teenager</td>
<td>postgraduate</td>
<td>Western Europe, United Kingdom, India, Ladakh, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>New Zealand, Western Europe, United Kingdom, Northern Africa, Israel, Malaysia, Indonesia, Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Indonesia, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Singapore, Thailand, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, USA, Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Canada/SE Asia/Scotland</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Northern Africa, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>England/SE Asia, USA &amp; England</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>United Kingdom, India, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>2 young</td>
<td>tertiary (currently enrolled)</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, United Kingdom, India, Nepal, Africa, Thailand, Singapore, Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, United Kingdom, India, Nepal, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>postgraduate</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Northern Africa, India, Tibet, Nepal, Pakistan, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>postgraduate</td>
<td>New Zealand, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, United Kingdom, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, Philippines, Japan, South Pacific, Central America &amp; Cuba, USA, UAE, Oman</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>2 adult</td>
<td>junior high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high school</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>tertiary</td>
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<td>mid-50s #</td>
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<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>partial tertiary</td>
<td>New Zealand, Western Europe, United Kingdom, Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, United Kingdom, China, Russia, Indonesia, South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Queensland/Victoria/Western Australia</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>partial high school</td>
<td>Western Europe, Indonesia, Japan, Central America, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>England/ South Australia</td>
<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>2 adult</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Vietnam, China, Central America, Jamaica, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>3 adult</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Southern Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, South America, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary (1 year)</td>
<td>Western Europe, United Kingdom, Southern Africa, India, Nepal, China, USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
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<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Eastern Europe (specifically Turkey), Northern Africa, South Pacific, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Eastern Europe, Western Europe, United Kingdom, West Africa, Iran, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, USA, Canada, South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>4 adult</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>partner (divorced)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, United Kingdom (specifically Ireland), USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>1 adult</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, Iran, Thailand, China, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>partner (divorced)</td>
<td>2 adult</td>
<td>partial high school</td>
<td>Egypt, Thailand, India</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>divorced</td>
<td>2 adult</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>New Zealand, Western Europe, Eastern Europe (Turkey), United Kingdom, Singapore, Maldives, Northern Africa, Thailand, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>ACT/ New South Wales</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>New Zealand, United Kingdom, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Timor, USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>5 (teenage to adult)</td>
<td>postgraduate (currently enrolled)</td>
<td>South America (specifically Ecuador)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Western Europe, Eastern Europe (Czech, Hungary), Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, Tibet, Nepal, India, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>single (separated)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Western Europe, Vietnam, China, USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>partial high school (enrolled nurse cert.)</td>
<td>New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Zambia/Rhodesia</td>
<td>single (divorced)</td>
<td>2 teenagers</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>Western Europe, India, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary (currently enrolled)</td>
<td>Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Baltic States, Malaysia, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Western Europe, Mauritius, New Caledonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All demographic details correct at time of interview. Participants listed according to their interview order.

# This woman chose not to supply her actual age.
APPENDIX K
DATA ANALYSIS CATEGORIES
(HIGHER ORDER CODING)
# INITIAL LIST OF CATEGORIES

**WOMEN AND SOLO TRAVEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NODE NUMBER</th>
<th>NODE LABEL</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
<td>basic demographics: eg, age, work, place of residence, education etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>MOTIVATIONS</td>
<td>the reasons why women travel - solo or otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>OUTCOMES</td>
<td>the outcomes/impacts of travel on women and their lives (benefits/disbenefits?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>CONSTRAINTS</td>
<td>anything that limits/curtails women's lives and travel experiences (inc. challenges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>TRAVEL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>descriptions of the basic ‘how’ and ‘what’ of travel; travel types and preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>LIFE STORIES</td>
<td>stories of women's lives/life history; attitudes/philosophies on life/self, plans for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>TRAVEL PERCEPTIONS</td>
<td>Perceptions of/attitudes to travel, other travellers, other cultures, self as traveller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>STRATEGIES</td>
<td>Strategies/negotiation techniques to deal with constraints/challenges in women’s lives and travels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX L
LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN ‘GROUP FEEDBACK WORKSHOP’
[INSERT DATE]

Dear _______,

**RE: GROUP MEETING & PRESENTATION OF RESULTS TO WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE ‘SOLO WOMEN TRAVELLERS STUDY’, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY.**

I hope things are well for you! I am currently in the writing-up stage of my thesis on solo women travellers, for which you were interviewed ______ (insert date interviewed). As I write my results, I am continually aware that I am interpreting your stories and your experiences of travel. I want to ensure that these results, and my interpretations, accurately reflect your lives and your travels. You may remember that I spoke about disseminating these results to you towards the end of the study. Also, some of you have expressed interest in hearing of the results and of meeting some of the other women who were involved.

For these reasons, I would like to organise a small and informal get-together of the women I interviewed in South-East Queensland and Northern NSW. I would like to make a brief presentation of my results to the group, and then allow time for your comments, reflection and feedback. I will use this as a distinct method in my thesis which ensures, as much as possible, that I am adequately interpreting what you have said about your travels.

If there is sufficient interest, I will organise a meeting room at the Griffith University Gold Coast Campus in Southport (where I have an office) and will provide some food and drink – the whole thing shouldn’t take more than an hour and a half to two hours. I realise that the end of year is full of busy commitments, but I am hoping to have this group presentation and meeting before the year 2002 is finished! If you are interested and could spare a couple of hours in December, please email me at (email address supplied), or ring me on (phone numbers supplied), and identify:

1) if you will be around the Gold Coast area in the month of December
2) if you are interested in attending and meeting some of the other women
3) which days of the week and times of day best suit you.

I could organise an after work or weekend time if that would suit everybody.

I look forward to hearing back from you, but understand that you may not reply at this busy time of year. I am excited about getting your thoughts on my study, and hope that you might enjoy meeting some of the others involved. If I don’t hear from you over the next week or so, I will give you a call to gauge your interest in attending.

Best wishes, and take care

Erica Wilson, PhD Candidate
School of Tourism and Hotel Management
Griffith University
APPENDIX M
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM
(GROUP FEEDBACK WORKSHOP)
WOMEN AND SOLO TRAVEL STUDY

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT: GROUP PRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK DAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 2002

This presentation today of key findings of the ‘Women & Solo Travel Study’ (for which you were interviewed previously) is a chance for me, the researcher, to gauge the accuracy of the results of these interviews, and to see if what I have found resonates with you as a solo female traveller. It is also a chance to gain feedback from you on these findings and to discuss the results as a group.

As a researcher, I must assure you that during this group presentation and discussion session, everything you say will remain inside the meeting room and confidential. However, I may take notes during the session based on your feedback and comments, and some of what you say may be used or quoted within the written thesis or in academic presentations. These statements will not reveal your identity, and similar to the interview process, only your first name initial and age will be attached to the statement (eg., A, 52).

If you are satisfied with these confidentiality arrangements to ensure your continuing anonymity within the study, please print your name, sign and date below.

Thanking you,

Erica Wilson
Researcher
Women & Solo Travel Study
Griffith University

Print name: ____________________
Signature: ______________________
Date: __________________________