

Push, Pull, and Paradox: The Significance and Irony of Working-Holidays
For Young Canadians in Edinburgh

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Abstract

Push, Pull, and Paradox: The Significance and Irony of Working-Holidays
For Young Canadians in Edinburgh

Kathleen Rice

Drawing on six months of fieldwork carried out in Edinburgh, Scotland, this thesis focuses on young Canadians who held working-holidaymaker visas for the United Kingdom and who were living in Scotland over the summer and fall of 2006. Based on both an analysis of my ethnographic data as well as a review of relevant literature on tourism, youth travel, and social capital, I propose that with regards to Canadian working-holidaymakers in the UK, travel is a self-imposed rite of passage which serves as a means of transitioning from one life-stage to another, and moreover that the decision to experience life overseas often coincides with a change in status in the Canadian context. I also show that working-holidays are ironic when juxtaposed with conventional understandings of tourism and work as mutually exclusive, and therefore question an assumption that pervades much literature on travel, namely that tourism and work are antithetical.

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Note

In the interest of confidentiality, all personal names, as well as the names of establishments such as pubs and bars, are pseudonyms. Where applicable, to the best of my ability I have chosen pseudonyms which are culturally and/or ethnically appropriate for the individuals in question. For instance, Pierre-Olivier is used in lieu of a name with similar francophone associations, and Cameron is used in lieu of another name of Scottish origin. I have tried to employ the same technique with regards to the names of establishments. For example, 'Wallaby Bar' replaces the actual name of an Australian-themed bar, while The Black Hart replaces the name of a traditional Scottish pub.

Table of Contents

Note:	v
Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework	1
Chapter II: Methodology, Fieldsite, and Background Information	25
Studying Mobility: Methodological Concerns.....	25
The Working Holidaymaker Visa.....	27
Student/Youth Work-Abroad Programs.....	28
The Field.....	29
EU Influence on Workforce.....	32
Making Contact.....	34
Methods and Notable Activities.....	35
Trips Outside Edinburgh.....	37
Edinburgh's Festival.....	37
Qualitative Interviews.....	39
Chapter 3: Characteristics and Lifestyle of Canadian Working Holidaymakers in Edinburgh: Who is really there? What is it really like?	42
General Characteristics.....	42
The Youth Travel Agency.....	48
Centre Events: Orientation and Pub Nights.....	50
Work.....	51
Travel.....	57
Chapter 4: Travel Motivations: Why Go Abroad?	60
Why the Working Holidaymaker Route?: Work as a Means of Travel.....	71
Why the United Kingdom?.....	73
Chapter 5: The Paradox of the Working-Holiday: Work or Leisure?	76
Conceptualizing Tourism: A Brief Overview.....	76
The Working-Holiday: Tourism or Work?.....	78
When Work <i>is</i> Leisure.....	80
Balancing Work and Leisure.....	88
The Ordinary versus the Extraordinary.....	89
Working-Holiday as a means of Escaping Work.....	90
Chapter 6: What they Take Away	93
Working-Holiday: A Career-Asset?.....	100
Chapter 7: Conclusion	105
Bibliography	109

Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Travel and tourism are situated at the nexus of a several pertinent fields of social inquiry. On the one hand, tourism involves the mobility of individuals, ideas, and capital. Consequently, tourism links to larger issues of globalization. Moreover, the social and economic relationships that are created and sustained through tourism practices raise interesting questions regarding issues of class, ethnicity, work, and leisure. Given that these are all topics which have held considerable interest for social scientists, it is perhaps not surprising that a diverse body of academic literature has developed as researchers have sought to comprehend and theorize this phenomenon. In the following I situate my research within this literature, and illustrate its relationship to anthropological theory.

Broadly-speaking, my research falls within the sub-field of youth travel. The point has been made by several theorists that contemporary mass travel has developed in part out of youth travel practices, specifically the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-Century practice of the Grand Tour (Urry: 1990: 4; O’Rielly: 2006: 1004), and nineteenth-Century working-class ‘tramping’ (Adler: 1985:343, Cohen: 1973: 90). While both involve youth mobility, these activities are markedly different in several fundamental ways. On the one hand, the Grand Tour has been described as “that circuit of western Europe undertaken by a wealthy social elite for culture, education, and pleasure” (Towner: 1985:297). Other academics have further emphasized that through their Grand Tour these young elites were expected to gain education and strength of character through exposure to classical culture, and to experience a “private and

passionate experience of beauty and the sublime” (Urry: 1990:4; O’Rielly: 2006: 1004). Tramping, by contrast, was a predominantly working-class activity, often involving constant migration in the aim of finding work. In any case, both forms of travel were relatively small-scale activities, and mass youth travel did not really take off until the 1960s, when airfares began to fall within the reach of greater numbers of Western young people (Cohen: 1973: 92). Consequently, youth travel began to receive greater academic attention in the early 1970s.

In the 1970s, several academics took interest in the practices and behaviours of growing numbers of mobile Western youth. Referring to these individuals with labels such as ‘drifters’ (Cohen: 1972, 1973) and ‘wanderers’ (Vogt: 1976: 25), these academics observed that these young travellers exhibited qualities such as a desire to get “away from the beaten track” (Cohen: 1973: 89), to seek the extraordinary (Mukerji: 1978: 242), and to travel as a “quest for personal growth” (Vogt: 1976: 25). They also assert that these individuals tended to travel on a tight budget (Vogt: 1976: 27, also Mukerji: 1978), and tended to overwhelmingly be male (Cohen: 1973: 93¹, Mukerji: 1978: 242)². And Cohen in particular observed that these young drifters tended to be unpatriotic³, to use drugs, and to exhibit ‘countercultural’ tendencies (1973: 93). Interestingly, theorists such as Cohen and Mukerji pointed out that in their manner of travelling, these young travellers had much in common with earlier archetypes such as ‘hobos,’ ‘tramps,’ and ‘bums’ but differed in at least one particularly noteworthy way: they tended to be of affluent

¹ In a 1972 publication, Cohen’s choice of language suggests that he is describing the travel behaviours of young men. In his 1973 publication, however, he states that the number of young women adopting this lifestyle is increasing (1973: 93).

² In Vogt’s study of ‘wandering’ youth he does not comment on sex or gender. Nonetheless, his choice of language strongly suggests that he is in fact referring to mobile young men.

³ Cohen intends this comment particularly in reference to the Vietnam War.

background, and travelled in this manner out of choice rather than necessity (Cohen: 1973: 91).

Although there has been considerable research into youth travel since the early work of Cohen, Vogt, and Mukerji, they nonetheless identified several issues which feature prominently in later research. On one hand, the young travellers whom they studied were decidedly interested in distinguishing and distancing themselves from other travellers, and from more traditional forms of 'mass' tourism more generally. Moreover, these theorists also identified a class and socio-economic dimension to youth travel, which is still of relevance today and which will be discussed in much greater detail in the forthcoming. It bears mention, however, that most of this early theory was based more on observation than on interaction and interviews with young travellers (Mukerji is an exception).

While these earlier theorists provided a solid foundation for later research on youth travel, more recent theorists have shown that youth travel is a rather more complex phenomenon than these earlier texts suggest. For example, in "Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter Tourism," Cohen states that "the drifter (...) has no instrumental purpose in mind, and often not even a concrete goal when embarking on his trip" (1973: 91). The work of a number of more contemporary researchers raises questions as to whether youth travel is so purposeless and apathetic. For instance, based on qualitative research among young, British 'long-haul travellers'⁴ Luke Desforges suggests that through travel young people are able to both explore and negotiate their self-identity (2000: 927). Others, such as Munt and Craik, have given more thought to the class dimensions of youth travel, linking issues of consumption, cultural capital, and

⁴ Desforges studied British youth who had travelled to South America.

social status to contemporary youth travel practices (Craik: 1997: 127; Munt: 1994: 196-109). It also seems that Cohen's initial observation that young travellers tend to have deviant, unpatriotic and 'countercultural' tendencies may no longer be accurate. In a 1988 study of 'road culture' among long-term young travellers, Riley observes that her research subjects "are no more (...) anarchistic than members of the larger western culture [and] are not associated with what could be defined as a counterculture" (318), and in a recent publication Maoz bluntly states that "today they [backpackers] do not fit the description of drifters, deviants, and escapees depicted in some publications from the 1970s" (2007: 123) It also bears mention that the language used to describe young travellers has changed; the literature now reflects a focus on 'backpackers' or 'budget travellers,' both terms which have less negative connotations than 'drifter' or 'wanderer.'

Perhaps the most marked difference, however, between the earlier studies of mobile youth and the current literature is the degree to which academics have become more focused on specific qualities and behaviours exhibited by certain categories of young travellers. While earlier researchers seemed confident in making such broad and inclusive statements as "contemporary hitchhikers take delight in identifying themselves as "bums" (Mukerji: 1978: 243) and even:

Through exposure to what is foreign and unknown in a new environment, the wander cannot fail to assimilate new ideas, values, and customs. He can share the wealth of entire cultures and see the universals in man. Valuing communication as he does, he cannot avoid learning (Vogt: 1976: 32),

More recent theorists have recognised that such statements are rather too general. Suffice to say that since the 1970s, the literature on youth travel has diversified. Indeed, in a recent article on backpacker 'culture,' Sorensen states that the contemporary literature

Convincingly questions the notion of backpacking as a distinct and homogeneous category. Indeed, the variation and fractionation make it all but impossible to subsume all (...) individuals under one category, for it would be so broad as to be devoid of significance (2003: 848).

On the one hand, certain regions of the world –and the travellers that visit these destinations- have proven to be of particular academic interest over the past few decades. Australia, for instance, has proven a particularly fertile region for research, especially for researchers who are interested in ‘backpackers’ or ‘budget travellers’ (see, for instance, Gibson & Connell: 2003, Loker-Murphy: 1996, Loker-Murphy & Pearce: 1995, Murphy: 1999), while a number of Israeli scholars have shown particular curiosity in both the travel practices of young visitors to Israel, as well as of Israeli backpackers abroad (Maoz: 2007, 2005, 2004; Noy & Cohen: 2005; Noy: 2004, Uriely & Reichel: 2000; Uriely, Yonay & Simchai: 2002). Moreover, several academics have recently drawn attention to differences in travel behaviours and motivations among young travellers of different nationalities (Cohen & Noy: 2005; Maoz: 2007; Teo & Leong: 2006). It has also been noted that young women are going abroad in much greater numbers than in the past (Adler: 1985: 352; Murphy: 2000: 54; Riley: 1988: 319; Sorensen: 2003: 852), and although it is frequently stated that most young travellers are of Canadian, Australian, New Zealander, or Western European origin (Sorensen: 2003: 852; O’Rielly: 2006: 1002), there are nonetheless very recent publications have begun to focus on groups such as Japanese backpackers (Teo & Leong: 2006; Prideaux & Shinga: 2004, also see Muzaini: 2006 on ‘looking local’ in Asian backpacker circuits).

This thesis focuses on young Canadians who hold working-holidaymaker visas for the United Kingdom, and who were living and working in the UK over the summer and early fall of 2006. As is implied by their visa designation, these individuals may

legally work, although paradoxically, this is not supposed to be the primary purpose of their stay.⁵ In this way these individuals deviate from the comparatively mobile youth discussed in much of the abovementioned literature on youth travel. That said, work has been discussed in the context of youth travel for quite some time. For instance, in his early discussion of drifters, Cohen states that “drifters might combine work and travelling, [but] work is not a goal of a drifter’s trip; he considers it, at best, as an unpleasant necessity, and tends to work only when pressed by dire need” (1973: 92). Furthermore, Riley similarly states that many of the ‘budget travellers’ whom she studied took up temporary employment in fields such as fruit-picking (1988: 320). Interestingly, Cohen also uses the term ‘working holiday’ to describe the activities of young people who work abroad during short periods such as summer vacations (1973: 91).

Although the abovementioned authors discuss mobile youth who work, all of these articles give only passing note to this phenomenon. This is perhaps not surprising, given tourism and work are generally conceived as quite contrary activities; as Graburn states, “our conception of tourism is that it is *not work*” (1989: 22, emphasis in original. See also Urry; 1990).⁶ Despite this conventional separation between work and tourism, within the youth travel literature there are a few works which have given more central focus to young, working travellers. For instance, Uriely (2001) and Uriely and Reichel (2000) categorize various types of working travellers, and suggest that in many cases tourism and work are in fact inextricably linked. Of particular relevance to youth, Uriely provides a succinct and example-rich discussion of various ways in which groups of young people manage to combine work and tourism. Examples include ‘migrant tourism

⁵ This will be elaborated upon in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

⁶ The complexities and ironies of this notional separation between work and tourism will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter 4.

workers' who work at tourist hot-spots like Tenerife and Ibiza, and youth who work for board and accommodation at Israeli kibbutzim⁷ or on farms in various regions (2001: 4-5. For further discussion of farm tourism, see Deroni: 1983, Pearce: 1990). Uriely labels these latter as 'working-holiday tourists,' and states that these individuals "perceive their work engagement as a recreational activity that is part of their tourist experience" (2001: 6).

Uriely, Uriely and Reichel, and even earlier theorists such as Cohen and Riley highlight some of the more general aspects of what a working-holiday is, and moreover touch briefly on some ways in which it differs from the larger body of literature on young travelers. Certainly such characteristics as the tendency to consider one's time abroad as primarily a tourist experience despite working hold true in the case of the working-holidays discussed in this thesis. That said, this literature is still limited in that it is focused disproportionately on either typifying working-travellers (Uriely & Reichel: 2000), or else on Israeli youth (Cohen: 1973; Uriely: 2001). Its relevance to my thesis has some limitations.

To the best of my knowledge, the only academic literature which discusses working-holidaymakers in detail is that of Clarke (2005, 2004), Allon (2004), and Conradson and Latham (2005). Both Clarke and Allon conducted research in Australia; Clarke focuses specifically on British working-holidaymakers and explored issues of transnational migration, modernity, and Clifford's notion of dwelling-in-travelling through ethnographic research among these young travellers, while Allon considers working-holidaymakers within a larger discussion of 'cultural space' and the politics of

⁷ Kibbutz volunteers are also the only concrete examples of 'working holiday makers' provided by Cohen (1973).

identity among backpackers in Australia. Latham and Conradson focus specifically on New Zealander working-holidaymakers in London, through a framework of transmigration.

It should by now be evident that although there is a considerable literature on youth travel, studies of work and tourism –and of working-holidays in particular- are comparatively scarce. It is also noteworthy that although there is a modest body of literature on young British travellers (Desforges: 1998, 2001, Clark: 2005, 2004), within the youth travel literature I do not know of any studies which focus on Canadian youth. Indeed, although Canadians travellers are referred to in some of the ethnographic literature that I have found specifically on backpackers, these references either simply listed Canadians along with other nationalities such as Australians, Brits, and New Zealanders as being well-represented in backpacker culture (O’Rielly: 2006: 1001, Murphy: 2000: 54), or grouped them with Americans under the category of ‘North American’ (Loker-Murphy & Pearce: 829; Maoz: 2007, 124; Sorensen: 2003: 852). My thesis therefore has the potential to cover new ground.

With notable exceptions, theories on youth travel tend to fall into three broad camps: those who maintain that youth travel is a quest for authenticity (Gibson & Connell: 2003; Kristian & Jacobsen: 2000; MacCannell: 1989; May: 1999; Munt 1994; Noy: 2004), those who uphold that travel is in some sense a rite of passage for largely Western or Israeli youth (Maoz: 2007, Noy & Cohen: 2005, Noy; 2004, Stein: 2006), and those who view travel as a means of self-distinction and of securing cultural capital (Craik: 1997; Munt: 1994; Desforges: 2000). In the first instance, the assumption is that

in contemporary society individuals feel alienated from themselves and their social surroundings, and seek to find 'real,' 'authentic' experiences abroad (MacCannell: 1976:160). This branch of tourism theory does not prominently relate to my thesis. Rather, I take up elements of the latter two approaches as starting-points for understanding what working-holidays mean for the Canadian youths who formed the focus of my study. I caution, however, that it is more useful to think of youth travel as having similar elements to rites of passage, while realizing that the experiences and accounts of these working-holidaymakers deviate somewhat from traditional ideas of what a rite of passage is. In essence, I argue that the work-abroad experience of Canadian working-holidaymaker has strong commonalities with the stage of liminality described by Victor Turner in his discussion of rites of passage.

In discussing travel as a rite of passage, one must necessarily turn to the seminal work of Victor Turner. Profoundly influenced by the work of Van Gennep on rites of transition in a variety of cultures, over the course of his career Turner illustrated that this notion of rites of passage is useful in understanding social phenomena in complex, large-scale societies. According to Turner and Van Gennep, rites of passage involve three fundamental stages: separation, margin (a state of liminality), and re-aggregation (Turner: 1969: 49, 1977: 36). The first phase, separation, "comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group of individuals from an earlier fixed point in the social structure" (Turner: 1969: 94). The emphasis here is on a separation from a fairly stable social category, and from the relationships and behaviours that

characterize that status. The final phase is in some sense inversely parallel to the first; the individual or group of individuals are reintegrated “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed” (Turner: 1977: 36). The liminal stage is rather more complicated, however, and for Turner, more interesting. He emphasizes that a liminal state is essentially a threshold (1977: 37; 1969: 94-95). Individuals who are in this state, therefore, are in a symbolic sense situated at a transitional place. In his words,

Those undergoing it –call them liminaries- are betwixt-and-between established states of politico-jural structure. They evade ordinary cognitive classification, too for they are neither-this-nor-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-not-the other (1977: 37)

For Turner, this in-between stage is characterized by behaviours which are different than those normally allowed outside this liminal stage. More specifically, he explains that this stage is oftentimes characterized by experimental behaviours, as well as ‘play’ and amusement in various forms (1977: 40). With regards to my own research, these qualities of liminality will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Turner initially borrowed this conceptualization of rites of passage from Van Gennep as a means of comprehending ritual processes which he had observed among small-scale societies in Central Africa (1977: 36). He later developed his theory further, however, in ways which are of greater significance with regards my research. Firstly, he recognises that in small-scale, “pre-industrial societies” (1977: 36) rites of passage usually involve virtually all members of the society, while in large-scale contemporary societies these rituals have become matters of individual choice, and tend to manifest themselves through more specialized avenues such as the arts, sports, politics, and popular culture (1977: 36). These [pseudo] rites of passage, are therefore

different in some ways to those which he initially described as liminal. He uses the term 'liminoid' in order to distinguish:

I have called the latter "liminoid" by analogy with *ovoid*, "egg-like" and *asteroid*, star-like" I wish to convey by it something that is akin to the ritually liminal, or like it, but not identical with it. The "liminoid" represents, in a sense, the dismembering (...) of the liminal; for various things that "hang together" in liminal situations split off to pursue separate destinies as specialized arts and sports and so on, as liminal genres (Turner: 1977: 43, emphasis in original).

In suggesting that travel is a rite of passage for the Canadian working-holidaymakers with whom I interacted in Scotland, I am suggesting that youth travel can be understood as a liminoid activity in the way that Turner describes.

Considerable literature on tourism and mobility suggests that this is an appropriate comparison. For instance, Turner's description of liminality is strongly evoked by Nelson Graburn in "The Anthropology of Tourism." While he concedes that that tourism is an activity that is characteristic of modern industrial societies, nonetheless Graburn relates tourism to larger social and cultural patterns in suggesting that like activities such as play, ritual, pilgrimage, and worship, travel provides a profound yet structured break from ordinary life (1983: 11). Indeed, Graburn explains that like these traditional ritual processes, tourism involves a separation from 'normal' life, offering

Entry into another kind of moral state in which mental, expressive, and cultural needs come to the fore (...). It has a beginning, a period of separation characterized by "travel away from home;" a middle period of limited duration, to experience a "change" in the non-ordinary place; and an end, a return to the home and the workaday. Thus the structure of tourism is basically identical with the structure of all ritual behaviour (...). (1983: 11-12).

In short, Graburn illustrates that tourism has much in common with the longer-established activities which Turner identified as involving transition through liminal states.

While Graburn explicitly links tourism and rites of passage, it bears mention that he distinguishes between shorter-term, periodic forays abroad –which he refers to as ‘rites of intensification,’- and non-periodic ‘rites of passage’ tourism (1983: 12). An example of the former would be a standard, two week vacation to Cancun; the purpose of such a trip is, for Graburn, more rejuvenating than transformative. The latter, however, is of great pertinence to this thesis; I will therefore quote Graburn at length:

‘Rites of passage,’ “critical” or non-periodic rituals, sometimes called “life-crisis rites” (...) have to do with longitudinal time of the passage of human life. These rituals are society events focusing on the individual (or groups of individuals similarly situated) in order to mark the passage of the person from one society status to the next within the categories provided by their society (...). Rites of passage tourism is commonly found associated with major life changes, such as the emergence into adulthood (Graburn: 1983: 13).

The links that Graburn makes between tourism and Turner’s notion of ‘rites of passage’ seem plausible, given that a number of researchers have used such comparisons to explain tourist behaviours abroad. Much of the literature that I have found on the subject pertains particularly to Turner’s observation that individuals who are in liminal states tend to display different behaviours than they do in their day-to-day lives. For example, Lett (1983) argues that charter yacht tourism in the British Virgin Islands can be understood as a liminoid phenomenon, and points to behaviours such as sexual excess, wearing provocative beachwear, and excessive alcohol consumption as evidence of

‘liminoid license’⁸ (1983: 49-53). Wagner (1977) makes startlingly similar observations regarding Scandinavian charter tourists in the Gambia. Indeed, increased sexual license among tourists seems so pervasive a phenomenon that a number of more recent scholars who have linked liminality with tourism have approached the issue from a public health standpoint, out of concern regarding the spread of sexually transmitted disease. Examples include Thomas’ (2005) study of the sexual behaviour of women tourists in Tenerife, and Ford and Eiser (1996)’s study of sexual behaviour of tourists at English beach resorts.

While examples such as these are useful in they lend support to the argument that travel and tourism involve liminality, arguments which have built on Graburn’s abovementioned linking of certain kinds of travel with important points of transition in the spectrum of individuals’ lives are of particular relevance to my thesis. For example, in the introductory chapter of a recent publication on elite travel and movement, Vered Amit considers some of the commonalities among the practices and impetuses for travel among various privileged travellers, notably seasonal retiree-migrants, resident volunteer staff at a Hawaiian resort, and working-holidaymakers (2007: 1-14). Although a diverse bunch of individuals in many respects, she notes that in all three circumstances “geographical mobility has been initiated, in major part, as a vehicle for engaging in a significant life-cycle transition.” (2007: 6).

While such arguments are not often a central focus in the tourism literature that I have found, this position that travel abroad often coincides with transitional life-stages is nonetheless supported within the tourism literature. For instance, in a discussion of fieldwork conducted while working as a tour guide in Indonesia, Edward Bruner (1995)

⁸ Lett emphasizes that these activities and behaviours are out of keeping with the ‘at-home’ behaviours of his research subjects (1983: 49-53).

noted that a disproportionate number of his tour participants were newly-retired, and, interestingly, quite a few were newly-divorced or widowed. Moreover, of particular relevance to this thesis is the fact that travel and life-cycle transition are linked in a number of works on youth travel. For instance, of the young, 'budget travellers' that she discusses in her prominent study of 'road culture,' Riley states:

They are escaping from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routine, from their jobs, *from making decisions about careers, and desire to delay or postpone work, marriage, and other responsibilities* (...). A smaller number said they were escaping from a romantic relationship and pressures to marry. *These people are at one of life's junctures*. For example, they have just completed a college degree or are between jobs. Many are at a stage in their lives where they are unsure of the future commitments that they want to make (1988: 317, emphasis mine).

Similarly, in a very recent publication Darya Maoz states of backpackers that "many travel at times of transition in their life; some have experienced "life crises" prior to their journey. Thus, many of their journeys can be described as self-imposed rites of passage"⁹ (2007: 124). Moreover, she further states with regards the 20-25 year old Jewish Israeli backpackers whom she studied in India that "their journey, which lasted from four to twelve months, was conducted in a liminal stage before entering young adulthood" (2007: 127), and that "upon their return, most entered the phase of young adulthood. They had plans to study, work, and leave home" (2007: 128). Maoz's study is also significant in that she emphasizes the theoretical link between travel, liminoid states, and altered behaviour. More specifically, she observed that the young Israelis whom she studied "spend most of their time eating, drinking, smoking drugs, and talking" (2007: 128) and that they "rarely left their rooms and the attached veranda with a hammock and

⁹ This comment is made in reference to backpackers of diverse national origins, although the focus of Maoz's article is on Israeli backpackers.

a few chairs” (2007: 128). She also states that “the heavy use of drugs seems to reflect a motivation to run away from dealing with problems arising in the phase they are going through, between adolescence and adulthood” (2007: 130). Maoz situates this lifestyle in sharp contrast to the degree of structure that all of her research subjects had experienced while completing their compulsory military service in Israel. As a final note, I feel that it is pertinent to caution the reader against drawing too close an equation between Israeli backpackers’ motivations and practices and those of other young travellers, such as Canadian youth. This is because a several of the researchers who have devoted particular attention to Israeli backpackers have been emphatic that there are significant social and cultural differences between Israeli backpackers and young travellers of other nationalities; Cohen states, for instance, that “there appear to be differences between backpackers from different countries...this is particularly the case with Israeli backpackers” (2004: 99), while Maoz identifies that the stresses and experiences of Israeli military service as significantly influencing the travel behaviours of young Israelis (2007: 135-137).

I would like to use Turner’s concept of liminality and theorists such as Graburn who have related Turner’s work to travel and tourism as a foundation for suggesting that the decision to pursue a working-holiday can usefully be considered within the larger context of these individuals’ lives. Indeed, illustrating this very point is a major objective of this thesis. As will be shown, many individuals were at a point of transition from one status to the other (not to suggest, however, that all of these individuals were of the same status or in the same stage of life either before or after embarking on their travels). In

choosing to travel at points of fundamental juncture in their lives, these individuals were employing travel as a means of coping with transition.

Using the terms 'individual' and 'employ' in the above paragraph was intentional on my part; and the reasoning behind this pertains in itself to notions of a rite of passage in contemporary society. As Turner points out in 'Variations on a Theme of Liminality,' in complex, large-scale societies the important rituals associated with rites of passage –primarily religious or spiritual in other contexts- no longer apply to everyone but have rather 'contracted' to become matters of individual choice (1977: 36, 41). In other words, in contexts such as that of tourism within Canadian society, travel may be a rite of passage, but it is a rite of passage which is self-imposed by individuals who choose to go abroad. Graburn also juxtaposes travel as rite of passage with other rites of passage in stating "the touristic forms [of rites of passage] are usually self-imposed (and thereby more exceptional and personally meaningful) as one might expect in complex society" (1983: 13). If, then, travel – particularly youth travel- is a rite of passage that is in some sense self-chosen, it is imperative to question why individuals would feel compelled to place themselves in this liminal state.

Tourism as a form of mobility suggests that culturally-sanctioned reasons exist for leaving home to travel (Smith: 1977: 15).

The choice of tourist style stems from the culture and social structure of the home situation. The values chosen for the change, the reversal of the norm that is the 'magic' of tourism, are symbolic in the sense that they are meaningful in the context of the cultural structure of the tourists' society (Graburn: 1983: 22-23)

As the above quotes suggest, the decision to travel is made within the framework of social and cultural value-system of the 'home' culture. This means that in investigating why young Canadians choose to go abroad, we must investigate the significance of travel within the meanings that are attached to travel in Canadian society. Such an investigation involves a discussion of class and cultural capital.

Although it is increasingly recognised that international travel is by no means an exclusive privilege of the very wealthy (Amit: 2007, Harrison: 2003), nonetheless travel does involve consumption, and therefore requires at least some capital and leisure time. This means that travel is an activity which is inextricably linked to issues of status and distinction, and moreover, that individuals can embody privileged socioeconomic status through travel. Moreover, in choosing to travel –as well as through one's manner of travelling- one can define oneself as part of a particular cohort which shares some common values. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is useful in this regard. For Bourdieu, cultural capital is essentially the aggregate of all the knowledge, skills, education, and experiential advantages that gives an individual a higher social status in society. He explains that cultural capital is asserted through one's 'tastes' and cultural practices, and that "all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading and so forth) and preferences in literature, painting, or music, are closely linked to educational level and social origin" (Bourdieu: 1984: 1). Although taste may seem innate, Bourdieu argues that education and upbringing are fundamental in shaping the taste that an individual exhibits (1984:1).

It has been repeatedly noted that individuals who travel voluntarily tend to be educated and middle-class (Bruner: 2004, 1995, Harrison: 2003, Craik: 1997), which

suggest that travel is valorized in the socialization of this demographic. Graburn implies something to that effect through his use of the term “cultural self-confidence” (1983: 20). He uses this term to describe the motivations behind different styles of tourism and travel, and suggests that, “cultural self-confidence is less a matter of income than class, and most specifically childhood and educational experiences” (1983: 20). For Graburn, the middle-class in particular embody a degree of cultural self-confidence which is conducive to international travel, whereas the working-class –particularly in North America- “do not have the cultural self-confidence to travel much out of their familiar surrounding” (1983: 20), and tend to spend their leisure time and money in other ways.

A number of academics have discussed the role of cultural capital in the context of youth travel, arguing that travel is particularly status-enhancing for youth (Munt: 1994, O’Reilly: 2006, Sorensen: 2003). Munt, for instance, takes a particularly calculating and critical approach, stating that young, middle-class travellers

Are best conceived as *ego*-tourists, who search for a style of travel which is both reflective of an ‘alternative’ lifestyle and which is capable of maintaining and enhancing their cultural capital (Munt: 1994: 108).

He further quotes Featherstone in stating “travel has become critical to that assemblage of goods, practices, and experiences that are taken up as social “bridges and doors” to unite and exclude’ (Featherstone: 1991: 111). While there is some truth to Munt’s observations, other theorists of youth travel have found his analysis wanting; Desforge, for instance, feels that Munt fails to grasp that “travel does not provide cultural capital or other forms of identification in any simple sense” (Desforages: 2000: 938), but is rather is more significant in the context of how young people develop their sense of self-identity. Moreover, Clarke takes issue with Munt in his study of British working

holiday makers in Australia, stating that “in both Munt’s text and the text on which it is heavily based- Bourdieu’s (1984) *Distinction*- I fail to recognise my active, capable, reflexive research subjects” (Clarke: 2004: 505).

While I acknowledge that there are definite class and status dimensions to the travel motivations and practices of the working-holidaymakers that I studied with Edinburgh, I strongly echo Clarke’s professed discomfort with Munt’s analysis. Indeed, the point that I wish to make here is not that working-holidaymakers are simply status-hungry, and neither do I mean to suggest that they choose to live abroad solely because it may positively influence their social position relative to their peers. As will be shown, the people whom I studied are far more individual and complex than that. Rather, the work of Bourdieu and the abovementioned theorists that followed him is useful in that it sheds light on why travel might appeal to individuals who are in transitional stages of life.

As I have already alluded, many of these individuals were at places in their lives where their status was changing, be it their student status, their relationship status, or their status in some other regard. Many of them, therefore, were in stages that were already in some sense liminal, transitional, and uncertain. “Am I really ready to join the skilled workforce?” “Do I actually want a degree in chemical engineering?” “Do I want to stay here in this same job and this same apartment now that my partner has left?” Perhaps it is not surprising that for individuals who are asking themselves these questions, engaging in an exciting activity which is at once viewed favourably by their peer-group and also provides distance from their current circumstances would be so alluring. The possibility of returning from abroad after a

period of time -hopefully- with some answers to the abovementioned questions is likely appealing as well. After all, the vast majority of them *did* intend to join the skilled workforce at some point, most of those without postsecondary degrees *did* intend to pursue studies in *something*, and many individuals also foresaw partners and children at some point in their futures. And most of them wanted to get their travelling done before those obligations potentially got in the way.

In marrying issues of longstanding anthropological interest –notably rites of passage and work- with more contemporary interests in such topics as tourism and mobility, an analysis of working-holidays has the potential to offer some pertinent insights within the field of anthropology. I hope that this thesis lives up to that potential. Before delving into an ethnographic discussion, however, I feel that it is constructive to provide a concise overview of how the issues addressed in this thesis relate to broader interests within the discipline of anthropology.

In studying mobile individuals, this research takes up recent understandings of globalization which emphasize the importance of movement and flow of individuals, media, ideas, and capital (Appadurai: 2001, 1996; Eriksen: 2003; 1995). Indeed, the concept of flow is extremely useful, because it accommodates the reciprocal multi-directionality in terms of the movement of these young people; as young Canadians are heading to London on working-holidays, so are young Brits heading to Whistler or Australia's Gold Coast in similar capacity. Moreover, in focusing on movement and flow, this thesis further relates to recent anthropological insights into the relationship between

place and culture. In a discussion of global ‘ethnoscapes,’ Arjun Appadurai draws our attention to “the changing social, territorial, and cultural reproduction of group identity” (1991: 191), and notes that with increasing human migration, “the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality” (1991: 191). In studying young Canadians who live in Scotland, my research typifies the sort of anthropology which navigates these slippery ethnoscapes. Moreover, many of the Canadians whom I studied associated themselves with individuals of different national origins, but with whom they identified more strongly in certain regards than they might with many young Canadians at home.¹⁰

Working-holidays are also interesting when examined in relation to anthropological interests in work and migration. The literature on this subject is so vast, however, that for the purposes of my thesis I will focus on middle-class and elite labour-migration, as this relates most closely to my topic. While there has been some recent work done on this category of mobile individuals, the body of literature remains quite small. Prominent examples include Aihwa Ong’s study of a “diasporan managerial class” (1998: 113) of Chinese business-people and their families, and Ulf Hannerz’s work on international news correspondents (Hannerz: 2004). Moreover, within this literature I have found very little which focuses on young migrants (for notable exception, see above discussion of youth travel), and where it has been discussed in the context of youth migration, a number of researchers have given the analysis of this aspect of youth travel short shrift (Cohen: 1973, O’Rielly: 2006). The various particularities of the relationship between work and travel with regards working-holidaymakers will be examined in detail

¹⁰ For example, a young Canadian working-holidaymaker would likely feel a greater solidarity with an Australian or British working-holidaymaker who resided at the same hostel than they would with a young Canadian who has never been abroad.

in chapter 5 of this thesis, and will hopefully help flesh out this under-examined facet of privileged labour-migration.

This thesis is also pertinent to contemporary anthropological theory in that it challenges some of the theoretical conventions regarding tourism and work. Within much of the literature, it seems taken for granted that tourism and work are necessarily separate, binary activities. This separation is built on the premise that tourism is strictly a leisure activity. For example, in MacCannell's well-known book entitled *The Tourist*, he claims quite succinctly that "this is, then, a study of leisure" (1976: 5). Similarly, John Urry begins a discussion of tourism theory by stating that "making theoretical sense of 'fun, pleasure, and entertainment' has proved a difficult task for social scientists (1990: 7). The assumption then, is that since leisure and work are conventionally viewed as oppositional, so tourism and work must be similarly situated. Indeed, in John Urry's prominent discussion of the 'tourist gaze,' Urry builds his entire argument from the standpoint that tourism is most definitely *not* work. Likewise, in a succinct summary of the "minimal characteristics of the social practices which are conveniently described as tourism" (Urry: 1990: 2), Urry's first point begins with the statement that

Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organized work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies (Urry: 1990: 20).

Despite this tendency to view work and leisure as converse, there is nonetheless a body of literature which calls into question the degree to which tourism and work ought to be situated as mutually exclusive categories. This literature tends to approach this issue from the angle of work-related migration, and calls into question the validity of the common assumption that work-related migration is driven exclusively by economic needs. Rather,

it suggests that in certain situations, the opportunity to travel is a reason in and of itself for why individuals choose to pursue career opportunities abroad (Olwig and Sorensen: 2002, Amit 2002). For instance, in an article entitled “The moving ‘expert’: a study of mobile professionals in the Cayman Islands and North America,” Vered Amit discusses the situation of British expatriates and businesspeople who live and work in the Cayman Islands. While there is considerable variation among the careers and circumstances of the expatriates and businesspeople discussed in this article, Amit identifies a commonality in that members of both groups chose specific careers because of a “sense that travel could offer an escape from the staleness and stalemates of a sedentary life” (2002: 38).

Similarly, in her study of Caribbean higglers Carla Freeman identifies a new group of ‘suitcase’ traders’ who travel by commercial airline to either the USA or to neighbouring islands, and return home with suitcases full of marketable goods. While economic gain is one incentive for these women, they nonetheless also cite such incentives as shopping, breaks from husbands and children, night-clubbing, and time with friends (2002: 72-73).

Through examples such as those provided by Amit and Freeman, we begin to see that conceiving of work and leisure as diametrically opposed categories is rather overly-simplistic. A limited number of theorists on youth travel have also acknowledged this complimentary relationship; as previously mentioned, Riley (1988), Uriely (2000), and O’Reilly (1996), have all acknowledged that long-term budget travellers may engage in periods of work to replenish their funds when necessary. In discussing the ironies and particularities of working-holidays, this thesis will contribute to the body of literature which challenges the binary positioning of work and tourism.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is three-fold. Most significantly, I am examining the motivations and experiences of Canadian working-holidaymakers in the United Kingdom through a framework which assumes a relationship between impetuses for travel and significant changes in individuals' lives. In essence, I suggest that for the individuals whom I studied the decision to travel was made in relation to the larger context of their lives, variously in response to personal changes in life-stage and status and with a mind to larger conceptions of futures to which they aspired. I also aim, however, to juxtapose the situation of these working-holidaymakers with existent body of literature on youth travel and tourism more generally in order to highlight the particular and ironic nature of this form of travel. In doing so, I hope to contribute to broadening current theoretical understandings of youth travel, especially in a Canadian context.

Chapter II: **Methodology, Fieldsite, and Background Information**

The following material is provided as a succinct overview of the practical aspects of working-holidays. To that end, I provide relevant background information on the fieldsite, outline the methodological aspect of my fieldwork, and justify employing these methods in my fieldsite. This material is provided in order to give context to the ethnographic chapters of this thesis.

Studying Mobility: Methodological Concerns:

Vered Amit (2000) points out that many of the people we study are increasingly mobile, meaning that place-focused notions of culture are increasingly problematic for anthropologists. Moreover, as many individuals become more mobile, groups who share common identities are increasingly non-localized (Appadurai: 1991: 191). This certainly holds true with regards my research. Although my fieldwork involved international travel, in focusing on young Canadians who were living abroad I was, ironically, studying an aspect of my own culture and peer group. Although a more detailed description of these individuals is provided in the forthcoming chapter, suffice to say that in being a middle-class, university-educated Canadian in my mid-twenties I had more in common with many of them than either they or I had with the 'local' population. Additionally, I have lived a relatively mobile life for a young person in the Canadian context, and having resided for several years in each of Maritime Canada, Vancouver

Island, Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal meant that I had some degree of personal connection with most regions from which these young Canadians originated. This commonality was overwhelmingly an asset with regards my research.

That being said, there were also some challenges incumbent in studying working-holidaymakers. Firstly, as the term implies, work was a characteristic activity for virtually all of these individuals. As Ulf Hannerz has pointed out in his study of news correspondents, studying workers can present some challenges for anthropologists. Depending on the nature of their job, it is often difficult if not impossible to actually observe these individuals while they are working. It can also be rather boring and un-insightful; watching someone answer phones or photocopy documents for eight hours a day may not be a good use of one's limited time in the field. Moreover, if they work as a server or in the kitchen of a restaurant,¹¹ observing them at work may be prohibitively expensive in the former case, and forbidden on grounds of hygiene in the latter.

The intensely mobile nature of the fieldsite also influenced the nature of my research. At any given time individuals were coming and going from the field; unlike studying young, mobile groups such as students and tour groups, who all arrive at the same time, working-holidaymakers may arrive and depart at any time of year. This meant that more often than not, my research contacts were even less established in the local community than I was. It also meant that my group of research contacts was significantly different towards the end of my fieldwork relative to the beginning.

¹¹ Both of these jobs were relatively common forms of employment for working-holidaymakers.

The Working Holidaymaker Visa

There are a number of ways in which Canadians may work in the UK; working holidaymaker visas are but one among several available options. That said, the options that are available to an individual depend on a variety of factors. These factors include whether or not an individual has at least one grandparent born in the United Kingdom¹², as well as age, education, student versus non-student status, and skill-level. Moreover, the various visas and permits available differ from one another with regards to the sort of work one may hold, the length of time one may continue working, and the facility with which one can extend one's stay. With that in mind, the focus on individuals who hold working holidaymaker visas is at once a means of narrowing a research focus such that it is within the bounds of what is manageable in a Master's thesis, while also setting certain parameters with regards the individuals whom I studied.

The UKVisas website, administered by the Government of the United Kingdom, defines the working-holidaymaker visa as follows:

The Working Holidaymaker Scheme is an arrangement where a person aged between 17 and 30 can come to the UK for an extended holiday of up to two years. You can work but only if this is not the main reason for your stay. The holiday should be the main reason for your stay.

Working-holidaymaker visas are available to citizens of many nations, not exclusively Canada¹³. They are valid for two years yet only permit 12 months of legal

¹² Individuals who fulfill this requirement are eligible to apply for Ancestry visa, which permit five years of work in the UK. Moreover, after five years it is generally not difficult for Ancestry visa-holders to be granted residency in the UK, provided that they are employed. These visas are also available to individuals who have a grandparent born on the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands, as well as in Ireland prior to March 31st 1922 (UKVisas INF9: 2006).

¹³ For a full list of the Countries participating in the United Kingdom's Working Holidaymaker scheme, see Appendix 3 of the Immigration Rules, available on the 'Home Office' Website of the British High Commission in Canada.

work during this two-year period (SWAP Working Holidays: 2005-2006). This restriction, however, was implemented on February 8th 2005; prior to this date working holidaymakers were entitled to work for the duration of their visa. Since I carried out my research in 2006, I was therefore acquainted with a number of working-holidaymakers who had been legally working in the UK for well over a year.

The British Government stipulates that these visas are only available to individuals between seventeen and thirty years of age who have sufficient funds,¹⁴ who have no dependent children over the age of five, and who have never previously held a work visa for the United Kingdom (UKVisas: 2006). Moreover, working-holidaymakers should not intend to settle in the UK, and may neither work as professional sportspersons, nor set up their own business. Regardless of job, working-holidaymakers are not entitled to Public Funds such as income tax and housing benefits,¹⁵ and are not eligible for medical treatment on the National Health Service. The visas can only be procured before entering the UK (UKVisas 2006).

Student/Youth Travel Agencies and Organized Work-Abroad Programs

A number of the working-holidaymakers that I interviewed had come to the UK through a program offered by a student travel agency that facilitates working-holidays, internships, and volunteer opportunities for young Canadians in a variety of countries, of which the UK is one. This organization is partnered with similar organizations in various

¹⁴ In order to apply for this visa, Canadian applicants must produce a bank letter stating that they have a minimum of 2,500\$ CAD in their account.

¹⁵ For a full list of the benefits that are considered Public Funds, see <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1018721085371>

countries which facilitate these same opportunities for their own young nationals. There is a registration fee for participating in these programs, which entitles the participant to assistance in securing the appropriate visa, as well as to various services while overseas. While in the field I met a number of working-holidaymakers through such an agency. This organization both facilitates various programs for British youth, and also offers a range of services to young people of a variety of nationalities whose governments have similar reciprocal arrangement with Britain and who have chosen to come to the UK through sister organizations abroad. The services offered by this centre include a message-board, job and housing-search resources, social events, travel resources, a computer with internet, and an orientation session upon arrival.

The Field

My research was conducted in Edinburgh, Scotland. With a population of roughly 450,000, Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland as well as Scotland's second-largest city (UK Census 2001). It is also a major centre for finance and commerce, and is the strongest economic centre in the United Kingdom outside London (Edinburgh City Council: 2006). According to the most recent census (2001), Edinburgh has a high number of visible ethnic minorities (5.5%), and roughly one-fifth of Edinburgh's white population identified as 'non-Scottish.' As such, Edinburgh is a diverse city by Scottish standards, although not in comparison to neighbouring England (Census 2001). Incidentally, Edinburgh's age-structure is heavily-biased towards young people relative to the Scottish norm, owing in no small part to the roughly 100,000 students who study at Edinburgh's four universities (Graduate Prospects Ltd: 2007). Edinburgh is an

extremely cosmopolitan city for its size, and has the most educated citizenry of any city in the United Kingdom.

Throughout my fieldwork I lived in the residential neighbourhood of Marchmont, which is a fifteen minute walk from the city centre and ten minutes from the University of Edinburgh's main campus. A planned neighbourhood built in the 19th Century, Marchmont consists almost exclusively of Victorian four-story sandstone tenement flats. The neighbourhood is popular with students, and as a result it is not difficult to find short-term accommodation during the summer. In fact, quite a few young foreigners whom I met over the summer lived in Marchmont during the summer months only, and either moved to other parts of Edinburgh come September, or else returned to their respective home-countries.

Like many of these young foreigners, I initially found a room in Marchmont for two-and a half months only. Through the University of Edinburgh's housing-search website I had contacted a Scottish student who was heading to Zambia for the summer through a volunteer organization, and who was happy to have me take over the remainder of her lease. Fortuitously for me, however, through this original flat I met another group of students who lived one floor below, and who had an empty room as of mid-September. I lived in this flat for the remainder of my time in Edinburgh, although there was a great deal of traffic between the two flats and the eight of us ate together most days of the week. All of my flatmates were students at the University of Edinburgh, and ranged in age from twenty to twenty-seven years. Three were from Ireland, one was English from Leeds, one half-Japanese half-English from London, one half-Polish half-Welsh from London, and one was a Luxembourgian ERASMUS student. Diverse households like this

were not uncommon among the young people with whom I was acquainted while in Edinburgh, whether students or young workers.

“It’s like a dream.” “I’ve been here nearly two years, and I still have these moments when I can’t believe I really live here!” “Pinch me.” “It’s the third eye of Europe, apparently. There’s something here that pulls good people and holds onto them.” These are just a sample of the ways in which young foreigners I met described the city of Edinburgh. There is something at once dramatic and cosily romantic about its old buildings, grassy lawns, pedestrian-friendly streets –narrow and haphazard in the Old Town, wide and grand in the New Town,- innumerable pubs and cosy cafes, not to mention the ancient castle smack-dab in the middle on the top of a hill, and the rugged crags that surround the city centre and offer sea-views from the top. Aesthetically and atmospherically, Edinburgh is an unusually agreeable city indeed.

Given its aesthetic charm and historical and cultural allure, it is perhaps no surprise that tourism is a large industry in this city. Indeed, a recent figure states that roughly 30,000 people are employed in Edinburgh’s tourism and travel industry, and that tourism expenditure in the city contributes 1.6 billion pounds annually to the economy. Given tourism contributed a total of 4.2 billion pounds to the Scottish economy in 2006, Edinburgh’s status as an important tourist destination is evident (Scottish Tourism Forum: 2006b). Much of central Edinburgh is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which further enhances its appeal as a tourist destination.

Given these large numbers of tourists, Edinburgh necessarily boasts a large tourism and service industry. Edinburgh winters are dark and damp, however, which

means that the bulk of this tourist traffic is restricted to the summer months¹⁶ This has great relevance with regards to working-holidaymakers, because it means that there is an abundance of semi-seasonal work available in Edinburgh in the service and hospitality industries.

Aside from its draw as a tourist destination, Edinburgh was chosen as a field-site because it is one of two cities in the United Kingdom with centre a catering to the needs of working-holidaymakers who have come to the UK through the abovementioned youth travel agencies. It is pertinent that this organization was fully knowledgeable of my research objectives, and gave me permission to use their facilities to aid my research. It also bears mention that many of my informants were not in any way affiliated with said youth travel agencies.

EU Influence on Workforce

The United Kingdom's status as a member of the European Union has significant consequences with regards the UK workforce. A thorough summary of the UK's role in the EU is far beyond the scope of this thesis. That said, the relationship between EU policy, migration, and the UK labour market is of such relevance with regards the workforce in the UK that a succinct yet selective overview is helpful.

At the time of my fieldwork the EU comprised twenty-five nations, although it has since grown to twenty-seven. These twenty-seven nations share a common market, which involves a common agricultural policy, a common trade policy, a common fisheries policy, and a customs union. Practically-speaking, this means that within the EU there is relatively unrestricted movement of capital, food, services and persons (Watts &

¹⁶ The notable exception being Hogmanay (Edinburgh's New Year's celebration), which draws huge crowds.

Plinkington: 2005: 153). This is significant with regards to my research, because it means that all EU nationals may work in the UK indefinitely (UK Home Office: 2007).

Incidentally, nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland are also permitted to live and work in the UK, due to the European Economic Area Agreement (EEAA).

The demographics of migration to the UK have changed markedly in recent years, owing in large part to the EU's expansion to include Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, and Slovakia in May of 2004 (UK Department of Works and Pensions: 2006) . Indeed, according to UK National Statistics, in 2004¹⁷ 223,000 more people migrated to the UK than migrated abroad, and four-fifths of this increase is attributed to the above ten EU ascension countries (National Statistics: 2005). Polish nationals account for over sixty-percent of this figure (Gilpin *et al.* 2006: 23). Evidence suggests that these migrants are drawn primarily by the UK's strong economy and low unemployment rates relative their countries of origin (Gilpin *et al.* 2006: 24-25).

It has been found that the majority of these migrants come to the UK to work, specifically in industries such as administration, business and management, hospitality and catering, and agriculture (UK Department of Works and Pensions: 2006: 3), and average low pay relative to the UK workforce as a whole (Gilpin *et al.* 2006: 30). Like working-holidaymakers, they are not initially eligible for Public Funds,¹⁸ and therefore contribute to the UK economy while making few demands on the welfare system (Gilpin

¹⁷ The most recent year for which the British Government has published data.

¹⁸ Non-British EU nationals are entitled to certain UK Public Funds after one year of employment in the UK, unlike working-holidaymakers who are denied access under all circumstances (National Statistics 2006b: 9).

et al 2006: 3). They are also overwhelmingly in the same age range as working-holidaymakers (Gilpin *et al.* 2006: 25) In these ways they occupy a similar economic niche to working-holidaymakers, and are often on competition for the same jobs.¹⁹ It bears mention that the new restrictions on the working-holidaymaker visa came into play within less than a year of the abovementioned countries joining the EU. Roughly ten percent of these migrants find work in Scotland, and constitute just over one percent of the workforce in Edinburgh, Lothians, and Borders District (Gilpin *et al.*: 2006: 25-26).

It is difficult to ascertain how significant the role of working-holidaymakers –and Canadians in particular- play within the larger context of work-related migration to the UK. It bears mention that Canada does not feature on the top-ten list in terms of number of applications for National Insurance Numbers²⁰ from 2000 to the present, although Australia consistently does (National Statistics 2006b: 21).

Making Contact:

I found my informants through a variety of routes. I met several at the youth travel centre office by attending orientation sessions, at the invitation of their staff. Several others I met simply by hanging out at the centre, or by participating in such social events as Canada Day celebrations and pub-nights. I met still others by striking up conversations with English or French-speaking foreigners whom I met in shops, bars, and other public spaces and in due course explaining my research. I also made use of the ‘just friends’ section of the website Gumtree.com/Edinburgh. Indeed, this online resource was

¹⁹ Indeed, I was frequently told by working-holidaymakers who worked in the service industry that well over half the job applicants that they encountered were of Polish origin.

²⁰ A requirement for legal work in the UK.

particularly valuable; I met a fair number of the informants that had not participated in an organized program through this website. Finally, I made quite a few contacts through friends and informants, as most working holidaymakers whom I met seemed quite keen to introduce me to Canadian working holidaymaker friends.

Methods and Notable Activities

My primary methods consisted of participant observation and taped semi-structured interviews. Through both informal and semi-structured social interactions with working holidaymakers and their peers, I was able both to witness and experience many of social interactions and activities which constituted daily life for working-holidaymakers. Through one-on-one conversations and taped interviews, however, I was able to reference what I observed in relation to the lives of these individuals on a larger scale, and to encourage self-reflectivity on their parts with regards their experience as working-holidaymaker. This in turn provided valuable insight into why these individuals had chosen to participate in a working-holiday, as well as into what the working-holiday meant for them.

In terms of participant observation, within the constraints of time and budget I accepted all invitations to participate in activities which involved working-holidaymakers. Since this group is by no means homogeneous, however²¹, this meant that I was involved in a wide range of activities. As will be elaborated on in further chapters, a significant portion of many individuals' leisure time was devoted to socializing in pubs and bars, and as a result I spent a great deal of time socializing in drinking establishments. Similarly, I was invited to a number of house-parties which involved a

²¹ The characteristics of the working-holidaymakers whom I met in the field will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

good deal of alcohol. During the summer I also spent a fair bit of time hanging out in the park with working-holidaymakers, variously playing sports such as Frisbee and soccer, having picnics and drinks, or just lying in the sun and chatting. With some contacts – notably those on the older end of the working-holiday spectrum- however, I tended to meet for meals either at my home, their home, or at restaurants. With one young woman I had a routine of meeting for dinner every Tuesday, and with another we tried to meet for diner breakfast once every couple weeks. Furthermore, one young man who managed a hostel was fond of films and clothes, so from time to time I accompanied him either to the cinema or shopping. Broadly-speaking, these contacts had been working in the UK for longer periods of time, and had established day-to-day lives for themselves which were in many ways similar to what they were used to back in Canada.

Since many working-holidaymakers try to fit touristic activities around their work-schedules, I also participated in more touristic activities. Notable activities included trips to the National Museum of Scotland, to Edinburgh Castle, to Roslyn Chapel, and into the cemeteries and catacombs of the Old Town on Ghost Tours (of which there are abundance in Edinburgh). Through working-holidaymakers –and one woman on an Ancestry visa- I also became involved in some more unusual activities, most notably a creative-writing and performance group, a community of local rock and jazz musicians, and with a community of environmental activists who live in tree-houses in a forested glen just outside Edinburgh. All of these activities involved participant observation and informal conversations which have contributed substantially to the ethnographic material that follows.

Trips Outside Edinburgh

In addition to the activities in which I participated while in Edinburgh, I also went on two short trips with Canadian working-holidaymakers. The first trip was with David, a twenty-three year old from Prince Edward Island who will feature in the following chapters. David and I rented a car in Edinburgh, and drove through the central highlands to the Isle of Skye on a Friday. We stayed two days in a hostel in a small town with an inn, a whisky distillery, and perhaps fifteen houses. On Saturday and Sunday we went hiking in the Cuillin mountains, and in the evenings we listened to traditional music at the inn and enjoyed the extremely long hours of daylight. On Monday we returned to Edinburgh, stopping for a four-hour hike in Glencoe.

The second trip took place in early November. Nadia, a twenty-eight year old from Rimouski and I booked inexpensive Easyjet tickets to Berlin for four days. We stayed with a German translation student who had studied in Quebec City, and who was a friend of Nadia's brother. For the first two days we visited sites of historical interest, notably the Reichstag, Sanssouci Palace, and Checkpoint Charlie, since Nadia was highly interested in the historical aspects of the city and showed comparatively little interest in other aspects Berlin. After two days Nadia became ill, however. For the remainder of the trip I was lucky enough to be shown around by a friend of our hostess, who wanted a chance to practice his English. We returned to Edinburgh early on a Monday morning.

Edinburgh's Festival

The Edinburgh's 'Festival' is worthy of mention in this section for several reasons. Firstly, its scale is such that it affects the Edinburgh service and travel industry

to a marked degree, and therefore affects both the work and leisure lives of working-holidaymakers. Secondly, the Festival and its effects on the demographics of Edinburgh feature in a number of the ethnographic accounts that follow. As such, brief description will be helpful in grasping elements of the forthcoming.

Although people will often refer simply to “The Festival,” there are in fact a number of arts and cultural festivals which take place concurrently during the month of August. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, and the Edinburgh Military Tattoo are perhaps the most famous, although this list in by no means exhaustive. Together these festivals draw over half a million visitors, thereby more than doubling the population of the city for period of four weeks (Edinburgh Convention Bureau: 2007a). To give some idea of the scale of these events, according to the website of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival it would take nearly six years to watch each of the 1,867 Fringe Festival show for the 2006 season back-to-back (2007).

This inundation of tourists and performers generates a large number of temporary jobs in Edinburgh, and many of these jobs are filled by young temporary workers such as working-holidaymakers.²² Judging from my research findings, many such visa-holders came to Edinburgh from other parts of the UK expressly for the month of August in order to combine work with touristic activities associated with the festivals. Some individuals that I met found jobs as service staff in temporary bars, clubs and restaurants that sprang up all over the city, while others were hired on as additional cleaning and reception staff at hostels, hotels, and guesthouses. Moreover, other acquaintances of mine who already worked in these industries often found themselves working longer hours than at other

²² In my observation students also made up a significant portion of the temporary Festival workforce.

times of year. Finally, those with few skills in the service industry were often successful at finding work distributing fliers, while some with experience working in the arts or in ticketing were able to find work in box offices or as administrative and organizational staff for shows.

Owing to the generosity of research contacts who were employed in various festival-related jobs, I was able to participate in numerous festival-related activities during the month of August 2006. This allowed me to meet a fair number of temporary workers, and to get a sense of the place that unskilled working-holidaymakers often occupy in the UK job-market. Moreover, through my close friendship with an Australian working-holidaymaker who worked both as a stage manager for a Fringe show and in the box office of a prominent venue, I was able to regularly attend shows and to bypass the queue to Edinburgh's largest temporary beer garden and party venue. This offered me the valuable opportunity to observe the leisure lifestyle of many visitors to Edinburgh, working-holidaymakers among them. A disproportionate number of my fieldwork contacts and observations were made during the month of August, owing in large part to the social and research opportunities associated with Edinburgh's festivals.

Qualitative Interviews:

Over the course of my stay in Edinburgh, I conducted a total of twenty-six formal, taped interviews with Canadian Working Holidaymakers living in Edinburgh, as well as one interview with a Canadian Working Holidaymaker who was working in Ireland but passing through Edinburgh, and one young Canadian with a British passport who was temporarily living and working in Edinburgh. All of my interviewees fell within the age-

restrictions imposed by the eligibility criteria for the UK working holidaymaker visa. These interviews were taped and were conducted in places of the interviewees' choosing, often in quiet bars, cafes, parks, or in either my home or theirs. They took anywhere from forty-five minutes to over two hours, depending on the amount of detail the interviewee chose to provide. As one might expect, individuals who had been living in the UK for longer periods generally had a great deal more to discuss than those who were comparatively newly-arrived.

Because of the different lives and experiences of Canadian working-holidaymakers in the UK, there was some variation in the questions that I posed in these interviews. For instance, if someone has just told me that it is their first time overseas, it would not have made sense to ask them about their previous overseas travel experience. That said, these taped interviews had the same general structure in that they all touched on topics which fell within the following broad categories:

- General personal, educational, and family background
- Reflections on travel and previous travel experiences
- Motivations and aspirations for taking a working-holiday in the UK
- Work, and how working in the UK relates to past work and future career plans
- Daily life in the UK
- Reflections on one's self-development
- Relationship of working-holiday to one's future

The following chapters draw on ethnographic material gathered both through these interviews, and through participation in and reflection on the abovementioned activities.

Chapter 3: Characteristics and Lifestyle of Canadian Working Holidaymakers in Edinburgh:

Who is really there? What is it really like?

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, I conducted a total of twenty-six qualitative interviews with Canadian Working Holidaymakers living in Edinburgh, as well as one interview with a Canadian Working Holidaymaker who was working in Ireland but passed through Edinburgh on holiday, and one young Canadian with a British passport who was working temporarily in Edinburgh. In addition to these individuals, I also got to know two other Canadian working-holidaymakers quite closely, and had regular although less personal contact with several more. In addition, I maintained regular contact with working holidaymakers of other nationalities, and indeed, two of my very closest friends in Edinburgh were Australian and New Zealander respectively, one on a working-holiday and the other on an Ancestry visa. The following chapter is based on my interviews, informal conversations with, and participant observation among these individuals, and is intended to provide an overview of who and what a working-holidaymaker is, as well as what a working-holiday is like.

General Characteristics

All the working holidaymakers that I met were between nineteen and twenty-nine years of age, with the bulk being between twenty and twenty-seven. Of those I interviewed, eleven were male and seventeen were female. The two additional Canadian working holidaymakers with whom I was close were also female, as were the Australian and New Zealander whom I mentioned above. It is difficult to speculate as to whether

this reflects a female bias among working holidaymakers more generally, since my gender as researcher may have had some bearing on the contacts that I was able to establish and maintain.

There was considerable variation among these working-holidaymakers in terms of geographical origin within Canada. British Columbia was the most prominently represented province, with six interviewees as well as the fiancé of an interviewee all originating in that province. Four interviewees were from Ontario and Alberta respectively, and three were from each of Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. I interviewed two individuals apiece from PEI, Quebec, Manitoba, and New Brunswick respectively. I did not interview anyone from either Newfoundland and Labrador or any of the Territories, nor did I encounter anyone from these regions during my six months in Edinburgh.²³

Within these provincial designations there was considerable variation as to whether people came from urban or rural areas. While most of the major cities were represented –specifically Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary,- as well as a number of mid-sized cities –notably Victoria, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Halifax,- I also made contact with Canadians from Courtney BC, Moosemin Saskatchewan, New Glasgow Nova Scotia, and Rimouski Quebec, to name but a few. It also bears mention that I encountered a fair number of Francophone Quebecois in Edinburgh, but had more difficulty interviewing them. This is partly because many of them were passing through briefly, heading to live-in jobs in the highlands and islands where employers may not be able to be as discriminating in terms of hiring fluent English speakers for seasonal work. Moreover, in

²³ Although I did not encounter any Newfoundlanders in Scotland, nonetheless individuals who had worked in the Republic of Ireland related that they had met Newfoundlanders there.

my observation many of the Quebecois whom I encountered were living and travelling in pairs or groups with other French speakers; it seemed in many cases that individuals who already had established, French-speaking social networks felt less compelled to befriend me. I think it is no coincidence that the few French-Canadians with whom I established close friendships while in Edinburgh had come to Scotland alone. Suffice to say that although I speak French as a second language and was comfortable conducting interviews in French, I found it more difficult to establish relationships with native French speakers.

Somewhat related to issues of origin, there was also some variation in terms of the degree to which individuals had led mobile lives before coming to the UK. Seventeen out of twenty-eight interviewees have lived in the same place for their entire lives prior to embarking on a working holiday, while eleven had moved at least once. Interestingly, seventeen out of twenty-eight have travelled overseas²⁴ prior to this trip, and eleven had never been abroad previous to their trip. Of those who had been abroad before most had been abroad multiple times, and for a number of individuals it was not their first trip to Europe. For instance:

Alison: I came to Europe to my family about ten years ago, we did Europe in five weeks. Very crowded... I came to school in France a few years ago for four months, and I went to Australia for a month travelling around with some of my friends. And then this is my third trip to Europe, travelling around.

Keith: It's my first time living overseas. I have travelled with my family to other countries. I've been to Finland, Sweden, and Estonia...and I've been to the US multiple times.

Brett: I did three weeks overseas a couple years ago. Just three weeks, nothing exciting. Western Europe. Did about thirteen countries in those three weeks, so it was one of those intense, quick trips.

²⁴ At the time of interview it did not occur to me to distinguish between 'overseas' and 'outside Canada' in my interview questioning. It is highly possible, therefore, that some or all of the eleven individuals who defined their working-holiday as their first time 'overseas' had travelled outside Canada, but within North America.

Others had done a great deal of travelling before, and wanted to experience what it was like to *live* abroad. For example, when Madison was asked if she could discuss her previous travel experience, she replied:

Yes I can! This is the first place I've lived for a long period of time. But I've done a ton of backpacking. I've backpacked around Australia twice, and New Zealand, and Malaysia, and Europe, did a six-week whirlwind tour of Europe. That too. And then vacations in Hawaii, Mexico, things like that.

Of the twenty-eight individuals whom I interviewed, all had finished secondary school and two-thirds had some form of postsecondary education either at the College or University level. One individual had a teaching degree and a Bachelor's degree, one individual had a Diploma in hospitality management in addition to a Bachelor's degree, and one was in the middle of a Diploma in radio broadcasting, having already completed a Bachelor of Arts. A third of these twenty-eight had begun postsecondary education but had left it incomplete, however. Most of these individuals were on the younger end of the spectrum, and had plans to return to their studies once they felt ready. In one unusual case, however, a twenty-eight year-old had left a bachelor's degree in psychology due to illness some years ago, and had opted to return to work rather than school because of the option of paid sick-leave. Of the individuals who had completed some level of post-secondary education, a disproportionate number of degrees were in the arts, humanities, and social sciences as opposed to the pure or applied sciences.

In terms of family background, there are some interesting observations to be made about these Canadian working holidaymakers. Firstly, they were all white, as were all the working-holidaymakers I met of any nationality. More unexpectedly, however, most of my interviewees come from large immediate families. As a matter of fact, out of twenty-

eight interviewees there was not a single only child. Further, over two-thirds of my interviewees have at least two siblings, meaning that there are at least three children in their families. Of this group, half are from families of four or more children. A full half of the Canadians whom I interviewed were the youngest sibling in their –often large- families.

A final important characteristic of the Canadian working holidaymakers I met is a love of travel, and a desire to make it a part of their lives later on (although not always in this same long-term capacity; this will be addressed in more detail in a forthcoming chapter). The destinations most often aspired to include Australia and New Zealand – where, incidentally, a fair number of them had already been, - and South-East Asia. Africa was also frequently mentioned, variously either the nation of South Africa specifically, or else a more vague and possibly romanticized notion of ‘Africa’ as a whole.’ For instance:

Kayla: I would love to see Australia and New Zealand, and I would love to see South-East Asia? I would love to see everywhere, basically. But I'll all come. One of the bonuses of being a teacher is I figure, if I make it a priority, even if I am living in Canada, if I plan and save then during my summer vacation I could do what I wanted to do. So...my mom and step-dad are actually thinking about going over to New Zealand. My step-dad is going to do a locum over there, which means he'll just replace a doctor for a year, and then if they're there it'll be a perfect opportunity to go and visit New Zealand.

Kathryn: I want to do an African, an African tour, and I want to go through China, and Japan, and Asia. I want to go into Thailand. And then I want to go into New Zealand, Australia, as well, but I mean pretty much everywhere, I mean there's a whole planet to see! So there's like a whole planet to see. And I have to see it.

Bill: I do want to spend some time travelling in South-East Asia. I did a month in Vietnam, but I would like to spend a lot more time there. India, and Africa as well. I have no fixed plans for this, but they are places that I eventually want to go.

Another characteristic of working holidaymakers which bears mention is the degree to which the internet plays a role in their establishing themselves in Edinburgh. While it is no surprise that these individuals would be reasonably tech-savvy in terms of keeping in touch with family and friends, I was surprised at the degree to which the internet played a vital role in finding accommodation, work, and in some cases even friends.

The most popular website used was www.gumtree.com. Much like Craigslist,²⁵ this website offers a housing search, personal ads, job-search listings, community message-boards, and an online garage-sale. Also like Craigslist, there are different Gumtree sites for different cities, so individuals could search just within Edinburgh, but also as far afield as New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, and South Africa. While many people posted available rooms, flats, or job openings, many others posted that they were looking for these same things. This arrangement seemed to work out well for many working holidaymakers, and in some cases even helped them find accommodation before arriving in the UK:

Alison: [we found our rooms] On Gumtree. Yeah. We looked through the ones there, but we also placed an ad saying "two Canadian girls looking for a room to share," and he got back to us. I found it easier having them do that, because then you know they're interested in us, whereas opposed to us emailing different people and them saying "no, we need one person."

Similarly with regards to work:

Fiona: Actually I got the job because on Gumtree I applied for just a receptionist position, and I got a phone-call from the agency that posted it. They're like "well this one's not available, but we have another position for you, if you want it." And so I got it that way. But I hadn't physically gone in to that agency. They had just contacted me through Gumtree.

²⁵ An online message-board that is popular in North America.

Jane: *Gumtree is a good website [for finding work]. I also found my flat through there. Gumtree helped me with the B&Bs and the nursery job. And then, the internet again, I don't know if it was EZ Roommate or Gumtree that found me my second flat.*

Some individuals even used the internet to make new friends. For instance, Kathryn met both of her closest friends in Edinburgh through Gumtree's 'just friends' personals message-board:

I went on the Gumtree friend site, and was like 'hello people? Is there anybody else around here?' kind of thing. And that's how I met my friends Sachi and Madison. And they're absolutely my best friends, they're amazing, they're so fantastic, like they're the best friends I've ever had.

Similarly, many people who had come through a youth travel agency used message-board to meet people.

The Youth Travel Agency

Kathryn: *Once I started to find out about the working-holidaymaker visa, I started to talk to random people about different options, and how do I get down there, and how do I plan it, everybody kept recommending 'oh, go with [the youth travel agency].' But the more I looked on it, it looks kind-of, like that's really amateur sort of stuff. Like as far as I'm concerned, I figure out how to get my own plane tickets, I can apply for the visa myself, and I don't have to pay anybody like 400 dollars to do it. So for the most part you can just do all that yourself, really easily. You don't need somebody else to figure that out. The only thing that I could have figure that I needed help with was the bank account, but even that, I mean how hard is it to open your own bank account? The programs and stuff seem really designed for people who don't want to do the work themselves. You know? And it's really easy. Like I find it so easy to get it figured out myself. I can't imagine paying somebody else.*

Brian: *I wanted to go to Europe with someone else, because I'm not the most independent person in the world. None of my friends were able to go, though. So I figured, through [the agency] they had a message board and something, so I could meet friends while I'm over here. So that was a big contributing factor, even more than the working thing, I think, is knowing that you can meet people easily, type thing.*

Trevor: As for the [youth travel agency], it's a good idea I find. You do get to meet other people, or other people participating on the program, and they hold pub meets, which makes it a little easier as well. As for meeting people in a hostel, it's easy enough. But I probably should have just looked into it myself, and arranged the visa on my own terms, because I think it would have cost cheaper, or it would have cost a lot less to do so. Since the [youth travel agency] is a bit of a program, they have a bit of a fee as well.

These three quotes –two from individuals who had come to the UK through an organized program, and one who made her own arrangements- offer some insight into what a youth travel program can provide, and who it caters to. Fifteen out of my twenty-eight interviewees came to the UK through an organized program, and thirteen did not. It bears mention that my sample is almost certainly skewed in favour of program participants, given the youth travel centre and its message board and social events were a primary means through which I made contact with informants. Similar resources were not available to me with regards to working-holidaymakers who had made more individual arrangements

The youth travel centre is located in the heart of Edinburgh's Old Town, downstairs from a backpacker bus-tour company. It is a very small office, consisting of only one room, and with only one employee. As a result it is a rather crowded space; the walls are covered with ever-changing job and housing postings, notices about social events and suggestions of 'things to do' in and around Edinburgh, and stacks of parcels sent by thoughtful parents and friends. Depending on the time of day and time of year, it can also be quite busy; orientation takes place three times a week –provided that at least one person has signed up for it,- and there is often considerable wait time for use of the one computer. Since the centre's services are available to young people of a various nationalities, on a busy day one might easily overhear Australian, New Zealander,

Canadian, American, and South African accents, as well as French, German, Spanish, and Czech being spoken. It is an exciting place, although congested enough that people rarely hang about the office once their business is done.

The Centre's Events: Orientation and Pub Nights.

All working-holidaymakers who arrange their trip through the youth travel agency are strongly encouraged to attend orientation either at the Edinburgh or London agency offices within 48 hours of arriving in the UK. As such, attending such orientation sessions is a feature of many working-holidaymakers' initial experience. I myself attended a number of orientation sessions while in Edinburgh. Although the number and nationality of participants differed from session to session, the content was essentially the same. Orientation takes place at 10:30 AM on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings (daily in London), and lasts about an hour and forty minutes. The first 10 minutes are typically spent discussing the services available at the travel centre. The next hour is spent discussing tax forms, the various kinds of taxes in the UK, and how to get your tax back if you make less than five thousand pounds a year. The final half hour or so is spent discussing how to get a National Insurance Number,²⁶ as well as covering tips for getting jobs in Scotland.

Roughly once-a-month the centre organizes 'pub nights,' to which all program-participants are invited. These events are intended to provide fun opportunities to make new friends, although the turn-out is often rather low. 'Pub-night' is in fact a very broad term; aside from just meeting at a pub, other pub-night events included literary pub tours, ceilidhs, pub-quiz nights, and ghost walks. These events seemed to be most popular with

²⁶ Mandatory for anyone legally working in the UK.

the English-speaking participants, and most people seemed to really enjoy these organized events.

Work

By now it should be apparent that there is some diversity among working-holidaymakers in terms of the, ages, levels of education, and work-experience that they bring with them to the UK. In some cases, this has bearing on the types of work available to them; not only is there a market in the UK for skills in fields such as teaching, engineering, and office work, but individuals who had experience finding work in their field back in Canada were often better-equipped to search for work upon their arrival in the UK. Inversely, many newly-graduated students, or those who had either left or had yet to commence postsecondary study were more limited in terms of the jobs available to them, as well as the resources necessary to find those jobs. And credentials-aside, there is of course something to be said for individual creativity, resourcefulness, and initiative when it comes to finding work in a foreign job-market. For all these reasons, it is unwise to over-generalise with regards to the work experiences of Canadian working-holidaymakers in Edinburgh. What follows is not intended as an exhaustive depiction of the working life of Canadian working-holidaymakers, therefore, but rather as accurate a window as I am able to offer into some trends that I observed throughout my fieldwork.

Quite a few working-holidaymakers work in the tourism and hospitality industry, primarily -although not exclusively- within the youth tourism niche. After all, most working-holidaymakers find themselves in youth hostels for their first days –if not

weeks- in the UK,²⁷ and many of them are quite flexible with regards to the kind of work that they are willing to do. Moreover, since there is often a high staff turn-over in businesses such as youth hostels and backpacker bars, some working-holidaymakers find work opportunities at institutions where they initially stayed as guests or where they had frequented as newly-arrived travellers.

I personally became acquainted with a number of such individuals through the hostel where I stayed when I first arrived in Edinburgh. The hostel was managed by a South African in his mid-thirties who had been granted permanent residency in the UK. There were two assistant managers, one of whom was a New Zealander with a British passport, and one of whom was a twenty-six year old Canadian working-holidaymaker who over time became both a close friend and valuable contact for my research. He describes more candidly than I could the atmosphere of the hostel:

I would have to say that ninety percent of [the staff] are on working-holiday or some sort of visa, whether it be Ancestral or a parent is English or Scottish or whatever. It's the nature of the hostel, especially with the way we have it set up. The way we have it set up is we have 16 staff on-site that are part-time and work fifteen or sixteen hours a week for their bed, nothing else. And then we have two on-site Assistant Managers of which I am one, and they work full-time and get paid full-time. And they have their own room, whereas the other 16 all sleep in one room. And then we have two full-time Managers, well one's a Manager, one's a General Manager, and they live off-site and they get paid the big bucks. So you live with your employees, for one. For two because its not a paid position, you work for your bed, most of them are, you know, new to the country or passing through. Its not something that one person could do for a really long time because you don't make any money. Even if you do get a part-time job, its hard living with 16 other people, working 16 hours here, and 20 hours at another place, you know. And if everyone does that they all get into each others' hair eventually.

This quote highlights a number of common aspects of life for many working-holidaymakers who find work in the youth-travel industry. The work environment tends

²⁷ Indeed, for an additional fee this agency offers the option of booking their clients into hostels for their first two nights in the UK.

to be highly international as well as highly social, rather transitory, and in many cases not well-paid enough to provide a feasible way of making one's living in the long-term. In many cases, individuals who find work in these sorts of environments also end up socializing primarily with other travellers. Cameron, who is also a Canadian working-holidaymaker who worked at this same hostel illustrates this very well through a description of his network of friends:

I've established two really good friends with two people from Australia. One older guy from Poland, he's actually 37 years old, but you'd swear he was 25. He's just a really easygoing guy, he's in good shape, he runs around all the time, just runs around the city, really great guy. Then there's the New Brunswicker that I was just mentioning, Adam from New Brunswick. Who else... South African, P. J., he's gone away to work for a few weeks, he'll be back here soon enough. And, Keith's a good guy, downstairs, he's from Halifax or Dartmouth or whatever. Other than that there's a few girls that I met from Canada here that have recently moved to flats and stuff like that. Ah, they've been all great. Other than that, more or less, more or less English speaking people I've really connected with. English is the main language. I think the only exception of Jan, he's from Poland. Those are my main people, my main friends. Oh! Also Dave from PEI. Ended up meeting him at the Wallaby Bar²⁸ one night 'cause he knew the Australian guys that I'm friends with.

Similarly, Derek from Alberta who worked at the same hostel recounted:

Well its kind-of interesting, just now there's a huge turn-over in the hostel. The two Italian people I work with, Ricardo and Giacomo, are leaving. Giacomo left yesterday, Ricardo's leaving today. Danielle,, an American I'm working with is leaving in a week, and Stu the Australian is leaving in a week...there's just a really high turn-over right now... I've been hanging around with a girl named Antoine, and a girl named Laura, they're a lot of fun, one's from France, one's from Australia, I've been hanging out with them quite a bit, they're very fun, very nice, they were working at another hostel previously, and they were working seven days a week. They couldn't get any days off. And they also work in, one works in a restaurant, one works in a pub, and they came over here and they like it much more. And Antoine's leaving back to France, I think, by the end of the month, and Laura, she's heading off in a week. And Rhiannon, a New Zealander girl I've been working with, she goes back to school in mid-

²⁸ The Wallaby is an Australian-themed sports-bar that is popular with young English-speaking travellers, as well as with Australians who live and work in Edinburgh. Most of its bar staff are Australian, South African, and New Zealander.

September. We might be doing a Haggis tour together before she goes back, and I'm not really sure about any of the Canadian boys. I don't really know what they're doing. They've been here for a long time, and I don't know when they're going or what their plans are...

Of the twenty-six Canadians whom I interviewed, a total of five worked in backpacker hostels either for a wage or in exchange for their accommodation. I was acquainted with another five Canadians who worked at hostels, as well as many individuals of other nationalities who worked in this field while in Edinburgh. Additionally, one of the Canadians who worked at a hostel also ran 'Quiz Night' at a backpacker bar.²⁹ The above provides a small window into the lifestyle of these sorts of working-holidaymakers.

While work in the hostel and service industry is often an attractive choice for individuals either with few marketable skills or else skills and experience in hospitality, many working-holidaymakers who have some clerical or secretarial skills manage to find office work. Temping agencies are very popular among both job-seekers, as well as for companies who are looking for employees. What's more, the student travel centre maintained good relations with several agencies who recognised that many working-holidaymakers are fluent English-speakers and have good computer and PR skills. At any given time there were at least 10 fliers for temp agencies posted on the job-search board at SWAP, and it seemed that individuals who possessed university degrees had a fair bit of success with this sort of work. This type of employment tends to be better-paid than work in the service industry.

²⁹ I knew of a total of four 'backpacker' bars in Edinburgh, two of them being Australian-themed. These bars tended to stock beers and ciders from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and occasionally the United States of America. They also tended to have special drink-promos and organized events catered to backpackers, notably celebrating either national holidays or sporting events.

Individuals who found office-work seem to often have a very different working-holiday experience than those who work in Edinburgh's tourism industry. A few excerpts from an interview with Madison provide a good example of the work situation of working-holidaymakers who find office work:

My background is in admin, essentially. Its sort of like office work, reception work, and some writing, editing, but not journal editing. Just like, I worked for the government for a contract basis, where I edited government audit letters that went out, for spelling and grammar and things like that. So yeah, English essentially. Anything to do with that. I work for a company called Scotia Gas Network, or Scotia Gas Connections, and they essentially connect the gas pipes to your house, so that you can have heat installed. I work in the planning department, so I'm going to be planning their jobs, but at the moment I just do the paperwork for it. Like, printing maps and analysing...it's very dull. So you're filling out forms and analysing maps and sending notices to the council and things like that. When I first came over I registered with about five different temp agencies, and they just find you work as you're going. I was working up at one temp agency that was just a company where they hired temps mostly, but it's like for an indefinite period? It's not just for two weeks or three months or something like that, it's as long as I want to stay? So it's like a permanent job, but I can leave whenever I want.

These individuals were also far more likely than those in the service industry to work alongside British and Scottish people. That said, Edinburgh's workforce is quite international, and many individuals found themselves working alongside both British people, as well as nationals of various countries within the EU. Carla's description of the environment where she worked as an office admin at a delicatessen is a case-in-point:

Where I work there's several people who are English who are here in Scotland working for one reason or another. There's also quite a few locals, like quite a few people that are definitely from Edinburgh. There's a lot of Polish people, which I've noticed, as well as some Italians, because it's an Italian place. There's one woman in the accounts department who's from Australia, and I think that she came over here on, I'm not sure if it was a vacation or if she was on a working holiday, but then now she's being sponsored by the company, so she has a five-year work visa.

Although fewer in number, I also met a number of skilled individuals who had managed to find work in their field of expertise. In one case, Kayla, a young woman with a Bachelor of Education came over with an organization which helped Canadian teachers find work in the UK. This was an intentional career-move on her part; she had just graduated from teacher's college in Vancouver, and recognised that the market for teachers is highly competitive in such a desirable region. It was Kayla's intent to gain career experience in the UK, and then return to Vancouver as a more experienced therefore competitive candidate for teaching jobs. While it is too soon to tell whether her international work experience will be an asset to her in terms of career marketability, Kayla nonetheless managed to find work which she felt helped her develop useful skills as a teacher:

Until when I came, I had very limited actually classroom experience, in terms of I'd just finished my B Ed., so I had four months in a practicum experience for my B Ed. as a teacher, in a grade one class, but it was in a very nice community, in a gorgeous school in North Vancouver, nestled in the mountains sort of thing, with a grade one class that was fantastic, and a sponsor-teacher, basically the teacher that I worked under was brilliant. And coming over here, I've worked in many situations that are completely different in terms of where the children are coming from, behaviour, social problems, emotional problems, all that stuff has been a real challenge in a lot of ways, but I was really quite nervous going into it, and I feel like I've learned... I've stretched my boundaries out more, I've realised what I can and can't deal with, and I think before I would have thought...the thought of dealing with kids like that would have scared me, and it did before I came, before I actually had to deal with it, but now I realise I can, which is good. So I think it was really good, as a new teacher, to realise the range of, of opportunities that are out there, and it's not all going to be this kind of pigeon-holed perfect little school.

In having come to the UK through an organization that helped her find work in her field, Kayla was the exception among the Canadian working-holidaymakers whom I met in Edinburgh. Nonetheless, some skilled individuals managed to find work in their field, despite having no connections prior to arriving. For example, Bill, who had several

years experience working as an engineer in sustainable energy found similar work with a similar company in Edinburgh, and worked for them throughout the duration of his visa. Similarly Kathryn, who had a degree in ‘Assaulted Women’s and Children’s Counselling and Advocacy’ managed to draw upon her expertise to secure a financially lucrative position at a charity guest-house that provided counselling and job-training for individuals whose capabilities were constrained by mental illness.

Travel

Travel played a part in the working-holiday experience of virtually every working-holidaymaker whom I interviewed; after all, every one of them had embarked on the journey from Canada to the United Kingdom. Moreover, I encountered no one who did not want to travel while on their working-holiday. The degree to which individuals were able to follow through with this desire, however, depended on a number of factors of which salary, length of stay, type of work, and prior savings are but the most obvious. In the following I will elaborate on the role that travel played in the working-holiday experience of the working-holidaymakers with whom I was acquainted.

Due in large part to the relatively inexpensive charter flights offered by airlines such as Ryanair and Easyjet, short trips within Europe and North-Africa were not uncommon. Indeed, when a round-trip ticket to cities such as Berlin, Amsterdam, Malaga, and Milan cost in the neighbourhood of sixty pounds and flights to London and Dublin were available for half that expense, many individuals deemed it worthwhile to leave work early on Friday, and arrive back either late Sunday or early Monday morning.

As a result, even some individuals who earned minimum-wage had managed to visit other parts of Europe while living and working in Edinburgh:

Jill [temp]: *I've been to Milan in Italy, I've been to Venesca in Switzerland, I've been to Morocco, all the northern parts over 14 days, and I've been to Malaga, Spain.*

Amy [receptionist at hostel]: *When I was living in London my cousin was there, so we went to Ireland and Spain, and Holland, and on my own I've been to Prague, and Paris, and I'm going to Portugal, I'm going to Norway, I've been to Russia and Helsinki.*

In contrast, a number of individuals ruefully recounted that although they needed to work to survive, holding a job tied them down, and kept them from travelling to the extent that they might wish:

Brett [pub-chef]: *My aspirations are just to save as much money as possible to get out of the UK, 'cause I'm relatively sick of it, 'cause its not as exciting as I had hoped. Especially coming from all the European countries that have so much more culture, or different culture, different languages, so I want an adventure, I want to get out of the UK.*

Tim [hostel receptionist]: *I needed to get a job. And I got a job as this hostel, and much as it can be stressful and annoying at times, it is really fun. And part of it just is laziness? And Edinburgh's good, because its vibrant and stuff, but its small. And Arthur's seat right in the middle, and the highlands aren't too far away, like there's lots of stuff that you can do nearby to get away if you want? I think I was hoping to do a lot of research [on where to go next]? So I figured 'well, I'll stay here a while and do some research, and go somewhere.' But then I haven't really, I've just been sucked in, hanging out.*

In several noteworthy cases, individual who had reasonably well-paid jobs exceeded their own expectations in terms of the travel that they were able to carry out. For instance, in the year-and-a-half since she left PEI, Karen had visited Ireland and Italy, had bought a one-way ticket to Prague and then travelled through Eastern Europe down

to Croatia, and had also spent two weeks in Egypt. She recognised that her job played a large part in why she was able to adopt such a mobile lifestyle:

I thought I'd just have some low-end, minimum-wage job where I'd be scraping even, and very little travel. And it's turned out the opposite, I got a good-paying job, its steady, it's full-time, and I get to travel a lot.

Perhaps the most impressive juggling of travel and work that I encountered, however, was that performed by Kathryn. As previously mentioned, Kathryn's job as a counsellor and supervisor at a guesthouse was well-paid. Although she earned a much higher salary than most of the working-holidaymakers I met and although she had acquired a UK credit card through her local bank, she was nonetheless 'broke' most of the time because she bought plane-tickets for herself and her boyfriend as soon as she got paid. Since arriving in the UK she had visited Romania, Norway, and is currently winding up her two-year working holiday with a ten-week trip through North Africa, starting in Egypt and ending in Morocco.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a depiction of what a working-holidaymaker is, as well as to shed some light on what working-holidaymakers do. Many of the themes discussed in this chapter will be more fully discussed throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Travel Motivations: Why Go Abroad?

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I have discussed Turner's notion of liminoid states, and illustrated how academics such as Graburn have applied this concept in the context of tourism. I have also suggested that this concept is applicable in the case of the Canadian working-holidaymakers that I studied in Edinburgh, and moreover that for these individuals, going abroad can be usefully understood through a framework which situates the working-holiday within the larger span of individuals' life-cycles and which considers the role that travel plays in transition between different life-stages and statuses. This chapter addresses the travel-motivations of my research subjects, and furthermore questions why these individuals chose to go the working-holidaymaker route. Moreover, this chapter directs greater focus on the abovementioned transitional aspect of travel, offering ethnographic evidence to support my argument.

Before delving into the ethnographic portion of this chapter, I would like to elaborate on the argument that I have previously made regarding travel abroad and a means of adjusting to the transition from one life-stage and status to another. Specifically, I would like to briefly discuss Snow and Brisset's position on the significance of pauses and breaks within the framework of how we organize and understand time, as I feel that it is extremely useful framework through which to understand the significance of Canadian working-holidaymakers' motivations for going abroad.

Drawing on earlier theories on modernity, Snow and Brisset explain that our contemporary society³⁰ is increasingly preoccupied with time, as well as how one can productively make use of the time that one has (1986: 2). They argue, moreover, that there has been a relative lack of attention to the significance of ‘breaks’ and ‘pauses’ within individuals life-spans, and suggest that there is a good deal more significance to breaks and pauses than we are generally wont to acknowledge. In their words:

Our contention is that the flow or rhythm of one’s personal and social life is characterized by alternating action and inaction, instances of briefly stopping or ceasing a course of action are as important to the personal and social vitality of an individual as intermissions, delays, silences, and hesitations of life are important in fashioning a sense of identity and personal worth as well as contributing to a sense of sociality and community (4).

Snow and Brisset discuss various kinds of breaks and pauses, and some are more relevant to the situation of working-holiday than others. Their notion of a “taking stock,” however, resonates so strongly with the situation of many of these individuals that I will quote them at length, and suggest that the reader bear their words in mind throughout the following:

In response to a personal or external challenge, this action [taking stock] involves a momentary cessation of a course of action followed by a review of past events and experiences for the purpose of realignment or termination. (...) Prior commitments and involvements may be reevaluated, and at the same time there may be an assessment of whether or not, and how, actions may be aligned to meet anticipated futures. (...) The pause to take stock may accomplish two objectives: (1) overcoming confusion and developing a sense of coherency and continuity for a series of actions and events; and (2) renewal of commitment and dedication to particular kinds of future behaviours (6).

Of further relevance to working-holidaymakers, Snow and Brisset point out that individuals –especially the middle-class- are constantly required to justify and offer

³⁰ Snow and Brisset expressly discuss American society, but I feel that sufficient parallels exist such that their argument holds true with respect to my thesis.

excuses for periods of inactivity (4). Incidentally, one of the great ironies of the working-holiday is that many of these young people are quite willing to work in jobs which “would be construed as mundane drudgery” (Amit: 2007:8), and therefore in some sense ‘inactive,’³¹ were they to hold those same jobs at home. The fact that these jobs confer different status in one local than another is interesting in itself, and has a great deal to do with the social and cultural significance of travel for young people.

Why go Abroad?

There is no one answer to why my research subjects decided to experience life overseas. As previously stated, they are all individuals with their own unique biographies, and it is problematic –and perhaps disrespectful- to pigeonhole them. That said, some common threads run through many individuals’ accounts, as I will show.

As resonates with Snow and Brisset’s premise, the notion of a ‘break’ arose repeatedly in discussions of motivating factors in choosing to live abroad, both among Canadian working-holidaymakers and working-holidaymakers of other nationalities. This echoes the findings of several researchers on backpacker culture, who have suggested that young travellers are often at a crossroads in their lives (Sorensen: 2003: 848, Reilly: 1988). Indeed, the prevalence with which the notion of a ‘break,’ or of being at a crossroads came up across lines of age, gender, and even nationality suggests that this is a key element of both the work-abroad experience, and of youth travel more generally. That said, the notion of breaking from something as well as of being at a crossroads begs the questions of what exactly individuals are breaking from, as well as what opportunities are available at that crossroads.

³¹ A discussion of the working aspect of working-holidays will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter.

For many working-holidaymakers, the 'break' pertained to changes –oftentimes unexpected- that had occurred in their home-lives before embarking on their working holiday. In such a context, these changes often altered what these working holidaymakers had hitherto expected to be doing with their lives, which in turn pushed them towards considering life abroad. This resonates strongly with Snow and Brisset's notion of "taking stock," and supports the argument that travel can be a means of engaging with life-cycle transition. For instance, in response to the question of why he decided to live abroad, Keith recounted the following:

There was a lot of personal factors in my life too that I won't get into too, too much as well that just meant that coming here was a good time. I had just broken up with my girlfriend, my lease was up on my apartment, my car had just broken down, I mean there was my job back home, but I was just serving in a restaurant. And that's alright but it's not what I want to do with my life, so all those things kinda indicated that it was the time to do something new. A lot of things changed in my life just before I came here, and so it was hard to say what my plans for the future were. If you had asked me three years ago what my plans were, I would probably tell you that I was going to be living with my at-the-time girlfriend still, working a nine-to-five job still, and potentially considering getting married. And if you'd said, 'nah, you're going to be Assistant Manager of a hostel in Edinburgh' I definitely would have said you're full of crap. So once all that changed really any future plans were completely thrown out the window, and so my plans have changed, but who knows what they would have been anyway, even if I hadn't come here.

It bears mention that while the above excerpt suggests that the break-up with his girlfriend was one factor among many, Keith later recounted that he had made the decision to live abroad upon learning that his ex-girlfriend had decided to teach English in Japan. Indeed, he stated that he did not like the idea of her experiencing life abroad while he stayed at home, and that he secretly felt in competition towards her. And furthermore, he also confided that he is determined to stay in the UK for at least as long a

time-period as she stays in Japan, in order to show that he is as capable as she is of challenging himself in this way.

Aside from illustrating that breaking from romantic relationships and uninspiring jobs can motivate young people to make some changes in their lives, I feel that Keith's situation with his former girlfriend is also interesting in light of the aforementioned theories regarding status and youth travel. The fact that he felt competitively towards her upon learning that she had decided to live in Japan, and that for him going abroad –and staying abroad for as long as she did- allowed him to feel somewhat more on par suggests that there is indeed considerable social status attached to going abroad. That said, Keith's situation also illustrates how travel can be employed as a means coming to terms with significant changes in one's life, and as process of taking stock of one's situation. It bears mention that Keith's situation as recently separated from a serious partner was by no means an isolated incident among the working holidaymakers whom I met in Edinburgh; I even got to know one individual who left for Edinburgh three months after divorcing her husband of eight years.

While some people listed unexpected changes in their home lives as primary motivators in their decision to do a working-holiday, others chose to come as a means of distancing themselves from problems back home. For example, in explaining why she decided to follow a friend's lead in choosing to work abroad, Kathryn stated that:

It really sucked when I was back home. My best friend was sleeping with my boyfriend! Yeah, I'd dated him like two years earlier, but I'd recently found out that they'd been together the whole time we were, and they'd kept it up the whole two years. So I was really crushed to learn that my best friend had been lying to me for so long. And my job was really crap, I was broke all the time, my apartment was terrible, I had roommates from hell, I didn't really have that many friends because in Toronto you don't really meet that many people that easily (...). Things were going pretty bad for me at that time, and

I was about to graduate school. And I was just really thinking that my life really, really, really needs to change, and I should just do something different, and, you know her plans just sounded so great. They were so exciting, and I was just like 'oh, I'd love to do that,' and she was like 'well you totally can,' but you know you never really think that you can do something like that? But I just sort of made up my mind, spur-of-the-moment, I was like 'I'm going to come with you!'

Another common pattern was to view a working holiday as a means of postponing important decisions back home. For instance, many individuals who had recently graduated from undergraduate or college degrees articulated that they were uncertain as to what they wanted to do with their degrees, and figured that living abroad might give them the time to make a decision. This sentiment is exemplified in the words of Cameron and Brian, who state:

Cameron: I have a few reasons [for going abroad], I think. One of them being recently coming out of university, and I've been in school my whole life since I been five years old, and I just really felt like I needed to get away from it, I think. I'm not sure exactly what I want to do with my life, you know (...). So, I'm pondering my future, more or less. I mean, I'd like to know what to do with myself, and I really have no idea, so I'll stay over here until it really hits me, I guess, what I really want to do.

Brian: I didn't really want to work, start working right after I graduated. I had friends who did, and they seemed kinda miserable. And I had money saved up. I think many people start working 'cause they're in debt, and if I was in debt I probably would have as well, but I had money saved up, and I wanted to do something else before finding a career, so figured this was the best thing for that.

The situation of individuals such as Cameron and Brian highlight several significant aspects of travel motivations among youth. Both young men were at a significant crossroads in life; they had come to the end of long periods of formal education, but did not feel ready to begin establishing careers. In choosing to travel at this point in their lives, they firstly confirm theories that synchronize travel with transitional stages of the life-cycle (Amit: 2007). Moreover, in living abroad both young men avoided

the difficult task of justifying to family and friends the period of inactivity that they found necessary in order to step back and take stock of their situation. Moreover, although both were working in fairly low-skill jobs that were similar to jobs that they could have found at home, they managed to turn their break into a status-conferring activity due to the social and cultural capital associated with travel abroad (Amit: 2007; Munt: 1994).

Using the working holiday as a means taking stock and of justifying for oneself and others taking a break from educational and career-related expectations is also evident in discussions of the pressures that my interviewees felt when making their decision to experience life abroad. When asked if they had felt any pressure to travel, virtually no one recounted having felt pressured by others, and several individuals conceded that they *had* felt pressured, but that the pressure came mostly from themselves. For instance, Fiona, from Victoria, reflected:

Pressure? [long pause] mmm...maybe, if there was any pressure, it would have come from myself. Me just pressured just to do something, rather than just be back home in Victoria, sitting around and not doing something, does that make sense?

And similarly Trevor from Sarnia:

It was more encouragement. There was no pressure. The only pressure I would have had would have been if I had stayed in my city, and that would have been "I'm stuck here."

Moreover, a few people expressed feeling negative pressure from peers who were of the opinion that they ought to be settling down. While comparatively fewer in number than cases of positive encouragement, these counter-examples are nonetheless telling. The situation of Karen from PEI, is an interesting example. Karen left UPEI two years into a BA, because:

I was just entering my third year of university, and kind-of got scared. I didn't know what I wanted to do with a degree, if I got it. And when you live on an island, especially Prince Edward Island, its so small, its kinda narrow-minded, and you get stuck in the character that everybody has seen you as, as you grow up. I decided I wasn't happy with what I was doing, where I was going, so I decided to travel and do something that I did want to do.

And while Karen's parents were supportive of her decision to put her studies on hold and to live abroad, she nonetheless received a great deal of negative reinforcement from her friends, many of whom thought she should be settling down with a job. Similarly, Rachel from New Brunswick had come to Edinburgh on a working holidaymaker visa upon finishing her undergraduate degree, and had loved it so much that she came back a second time, after working as a language teacher for six months back in Fredericton. Not everyone was very encouraging of her choice to return to Edinburgh:

I did feel a lot of bad pressure from some friends? I mean, I'm totally cool and I know I'm still young, but I have some friends back home that are getting married, buying their houses and stuff like that, and a lot of them the second time I came over said 'oh, why are you going back over? Didn't you already see the city? Didn't you already live it? And I'm just like 'no, you don't understand.' And these are people who've never really left New Brunswick, you know? That are, like, not criticizing, but just, you know, or 'oh, you have your degree, why don't you start your career.' Well I have started my career, I just put it on hold, and it's not like I'm here wasting my time, you know? So I've had lots of encouragement, and a lot of 'I'm crazy for doing this' too.

There are several important points to be drawn from experiences like Karen and Rachel's. Firstly, as Karen articulates, in going abroad she was escaping uncertainties about the educational and career choice that she had made by taking time away from her studies, both physically and mentally. Moreover, as Rachel stated, her peers tend to be preoccupied with transitioning into what they conceived as the next stage of their life-cycle, specifically securing homes and establishing long-term relationships. Since Rachel

and Karen were more uncertain than their peers with regards wanting to establish themselves in careers and with families, in going abroad both young women were able both to physically escape these pressures and to do something which they found appealing.

Aside from escaping pressures to conform to expectations of a 'proper' life, it bears mention that individuals who felt negative pressure from their peers, such as Karen and Rachel, tended to be from comparatively rural and less wealthy parts of Canada. This may add support to the theories within social science which suggest that travel as status-conferring activity pertains mostly to the middle and upper-middle class (Harrison: 2003, Munt: 1994). Indeed, this distinction between big-city versus small-town attitudes to travel was even remarked upon by one of my interviewees. Amy, who had lived in several small towns in Alberta recounted:

Most of my close friends, none of them have really travelled. 'cause a lot of them have just kind of lived in the same sort of small town for their entire life, and none of them really felt the need to leave? And I've talked to other people who have brothers or whatever who have gone overseas, and stuff like that, but none of my close friends have done it.

Although individuals from rural Canada were often more acutely aware than their comparatively urban peers with regards pressures to establish careers and families, nonetheless other individuals also articulated that they saw their travel opportunities within the larger spectrum of life-obligations. In other words, many of them felt that they were relatively unencumbered with responsibilities at this stage in the game, but felt that they might not have the same freedom to travel later due to career and familial commitments.

For example, Kristal from Saskatchewan recounted:

I've always wanted to travel, and I just decided to do it now, 'cause I wasn't attached to a job or anything. And at the time that I made the decision to travel, I wasn't attached to any guy either, but that changed before I came. So I just thought "I'm young, I can do it, and before I settle down and get started in life, I'll come over and travel."

Similarly, when asked if he would consider another extended travel experience such as a working holiday, Derek replied:

At one point I would have said yes, but probably not, because I think when I'm going to start wanting to get my life on track with getting into an ad agency, and furthering my design – I may work abroad if an ad agency puts me abroad, or a really good opportunity comes up in another country in my field. But other than that I don't think I'll do another working holiday.

Interestingly however, while many individuals wanted to get their travelling done before assuming more 'adult' responsibilities, there were a of couple individuals in their late twenties who were seeking rather the opposite in taking a working-holiday. Lindsay, a twenty-eight year old woman from Winnipeg who was working in Edinburgh as a manager of a backpacker hostel had sold her house and car and left a senior position at a bank to come to Edinburgh, because, in her own word, she wanted to "*get away from professional life for a little while, do something different, see new things, meet people.*" Similarly, Bill, twenty-nine, had left a job as a manager of engineering in a sustainable energy firm where he had worked for four years in order to come to Edinburgh on a working holiday. In both cases, these individuals felt that there was more to life than their quotidian stress and routine, and travelling was a way of filling those gaps. Although their circumstances were different than those of individuals such as Kristal, who were not yet established in careers, their motivations are nonetheless common in that they had some sense of what constituted a fulfilling life over the long-term.

Another common situation that I encountered involved individuals who had left pursuits such as formal education in order to travel. Indeed, as mentioned previously, out of twenty-eight interviewees, eight had incomplete postsecondary degrees. Most of these individuals were on the younger end of the spectrum, and many related that they had been unhappy or disillusioned with postsecondary education. For instance,

Brett: When I was in high-school everyone said “you have to go to university, ‘cause if you don’t go to university right away then you will screw up your life, and you’ll never be happy again!” So it really scared me! And when I finished high school I went to university, thinking that “okay, well at least it’s going to be different, I’m going to have fun, its going to be a big change.” But it wasn’t. It was just more school, all the same thing, so I got out of there as fast as possible, and just came travelling instead of going to university anymore.

Tim: Did one year of, it was the Liberal Arts College at Concordia, so it was Western Society and Culture. I did the first year, and basically the idea was to read the great books of Western civilization. So we started with the Bible, and we did Greek philosophy, and did a bit of Shakespeare, and did a whole gamut of random things. So I did the first year and I didn’t really like it so much, so I then went to Whistler.

Jane: I finished high school, and I went to one year of university at University of New Brunswick. I did a concurrent arts/science degree, which is like nine courses a semester, which followed me to drop out, and come here (...). I just realised that I’m not ready to go back to school. I know what I want to do, but I’m not ready to go back and actually sit down and focus on it. If I go back now I’m pretty sure that I wouldn’t give it my all? Whereas this way, I’m learning a lot about myself, I’m learning a lot more about what I specifically want to do with my life, and when I go home I know I can sit down and focus on my studies, get it all done with, and then get out there and do what I want to do.

Many of these same individuals planned to return to their studies eventually, however, and most echoed –with varying degrees of conviction- the sentiments of Brett in stating that “eventually I’ll come up with a solid idea of what I want to do, and I’m sure I’ll discover it whilst travelling.”

The abovementioned accounts suggest a number of things regarding working holidaymakers. Firstly, the diverse reasons for wanting to travel and the various life-stages of the individuals undertaking working-holidays support my position that viewing travel as primarily a quest for status is far too narrow. Indeed, individuals such as Bill and Lindsay on the one end and those such as Tim, Jane, and Brett on the other have chosen travel over activities such as jobs and degrees which are status-conferring in and of themselves. Moreover, narratives such as Kristal's, Jane's, and Brett's highlight the fact that these individuals have some sense of goals that they hope to accomplish in the not-so-distant future –for instance, completing a post-secondary degree or establishing oneself in a career,- yet are not quite ready to make the transition. Through travel they hope to become more prepared to follow through with these future plans.

Why the Working Holidaymaker Route?: Work as a Means of Travel

When asked why they had chosen to go the working holidaymaker route, virtually everyone mentioned the financial aspect as their primary motivation. Many were explicit that they wanted to stay in the UK for longer than your typical holiday, however, and felt that they could only achieve this if they were earning an income:

Amy: Well I wanted to come over here for as long as I can, and I knew that it was expensive, so I was like "well, I've gotta get a job while I'm there," so I just got it. It was just so I could have enough money to stay over here for as long as I possibly could?

Anouk: I want my travel to be long? And I would run out of money. I didn't want to go just for one month, because living in Canada, its like 700 bucks to come here, so its expensive, and once I'm here I want to visit everything, so, and its only for a year. More than that, maybe, so I need to work to survive.

While the financial aspect was a factor in virtually everyone's decision to get the working holidaymaker visa, it is nonetheless relevant to distinguish between the different sorts of 'holidays' that Canadian working holiday-makers were taking. For some, living and working in the UK was a reason to go abroad in and of itself, and spending most of one's holiday working in Edinburgh was an initial expectation. Bill, for instance, had spent nearly two years in Edinburgh by the time we met, and had come to Edinburgh on a working holiday visa as a skilled professional because he was tired of his routine at home. He had been working for an engineering company since three months into his visa, and was planning to leave only because his visa had expired.

Others had spent considerable time travelling around Europe before settling in Edinburgh, and were grudgingly working to save to fund future travels. For example, Brett and Cat, a couple from Edmonton, had travelled around Europe for nine months before settling in Edinburgh. They had also house-sat on a farm in Southern France for three months while the owners were on holiday in North Africa, and were living in Edinburgh only to save funds to finance further travels. As Brett states:

When I got here, I just came off of a nine-month vacation where I didn't work a day, so it was really annoying to have to go back to work. (...) My aspirations are just to save as much money as possible to get out of the UK, 'cause I'm relatively sick of it, 'cause its not as exciting as I had hoped, especially coming from all the European countries that have so much more culture, or different culture, different languages, so I want an adventure, I want to get out of the UK.

Tim expressed similar –although less aggressive- frustration with regards to being ready to move on: *"I think I spend a bit too much time in one place, so I'm looking forward to getting off and finding new areas."*

Some individuals were disappointed with the degree to which they were able to save while working in Edinburgh, and had therefore not travelled around Europe as much as they had hoped. Inversely, however, some individuals who had been living in Edinburgh for many months if not several years had managed to do a fair bit of travelling in Europe and North Africa, saving up their salary and then using Edinburgh as a 'home base' out of which to embark on shorter vacations. Karen, for instance, was thrilled with the degree to which she has been able to save and travel while working in Edinburgh:

I thought I'd just have some low-end, minimum-wage job where I'd be scraping even, and very little travel. And it's turned out the opposite, I got a good-paying job, its steady, it's full-time, and I get to travel a lot.

Her sentiments were echoed by Keith, who is Assistant Manager at a backpacker hostel:

'Backpacker' is the term that is thrown around, you know, hostels and stuff, I don't really fit that anymore because I have a full-time, salaried job with paid accommodation. I get to do things like, you know, Paris one month, London the next, Spain the next.³²

Why the United Kingdom?

For a surprising number of people, their choice of the UK was primarily a matter of convenience. For instance, with regards to Alison and Fiona's decision to work in the UK, Alison recounted:

The reason we got our holiday visas is in case we needed money. Like we had just planned to travel, but we didn't know how long we were going to be here for? So we got that just in case, and now we're using it. (...) We also just researched it on where we could go. Like we looked into seeing if we could do it in Europe, but you have to do it individual countries, it's not like a wide thing. Whereas the UK thing you can work in four places, four countries³³, so that

³² This seeming juxtaposition between those who used Edinburgh as a base from which they were able to save and travel, and those who found themselves spending more time in Edinburgh than they had anticipated is perhaps a result of both the types of jobs held, and individuals' lifestyle in Edinburgh as influencing their ability to save.

³³ By four countries she is referring to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

worked out better, then we didn't have to decide before we left where we wanted to stop and work, if we had to. And because our flight is in and out of London, so it's kinda central.

Similarly, Tim stated that he had originally wanted to go to the Middle East, but had settled on the UK in the end because of the money he could save by coordinating his travels with a family holiday:

I wanted to go to the Middle East, but like I said, its not like Europe, you can't just sort of waltz in, you kinda gotta know what you're doing? And I didn't know what I was doing, so I was actually going to go to France, so I could improve my French, but then it was sort of too late at this point to get a visa? And before I came here I went on a two-week trip to the Seychelles with my family? It was like a family holiday? And I thought, 'oh, if I coordinate my trip with this one then I don't have to pay any airfare!' So I did it like that. And then it was too late to get the French visa, because they're notorious apparently for, like they said they often take much longer than they say they will? So unless you really do it in advance you shouldn't, so I went for the UK one instead because they said it was dependable, and that you'd get it pretty quickly.

Similar to Tim's concerns regarding the feasibility of travelling in the Middle East, several people also related that they chose the UK among possible working holiday destinations because it seemed safer, more manageable, or not as far as other options such as Australia and New Zealand. For instance:

Keith: I felt that I didn't want to do something too drastic, like go to a Third World country or something on the other side of the world, but I didn't want to stay in my own country, in my own element. I wanted to do something a little bit harder, and grow. So I chose a happy medium, which is the UK. And also in terms of finances, its much cheaper to get here then even to fly to BC, so it was financially convenient as well, more so than, say Australia and New Zealand, which I would like to do at some point, but I'm just starting off I didn't want to commit - 'cause- all that finances, because you really don't know when you're going to come over here if you're gonna succeed or not when its your first time. Especially where I came by myself, and if I was going to go to New Zealand or Australia and screw up it would have been a lot more expensive. So I through it would be better just to come here. And, I mean luckily I haven't screwed up too bad.

The fact that many working-holidaymakers opted to work out of necessity, and also that many working-holidaymakers chose the UK somewhat arbitrarily is significant in several regards. On the one hand, the ambivalence that most working-holidaymakers felt towards the working aspect of the working-holiday strongly suggests that it is the break from home rather than the promise of interesting or status-conferring work that draws young people to pursue working-holidays. Also, in being rather flexible with regards their travel-destination (within the constraints of finances and personal safety, at least), these working-holidaymakers further illustrate that going abroad is appealing as an activity in and of itself.

In this chapter I have tried aimed to illustrate two things: firstly, I have highlighted the importance of breaking from one set of circumstances as a means of coming to terms with change or transition, and I have provided ethnographic examples of how this applies to the working-holidaymakers with whom I collaborated. In exploring the financial motivations as well as the reasons for choosing the UK as a working-holiday destination, however, I have illustrated that for many working-holidaymakers the act of 'going abroad,' and the meanings that are attached to this activity are more significant than what one does while one is abroad. This concept will be explored more fully in the following chapter, which addresses the relationship between work, travel, and leisure for working-holidaymakers.

Chapter 5: The Paradox of the Working-Holiday: Work or Leisure?

Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organised work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in 'modern' societies.

Thus John Urry (2002) begins a succinct summary of what is traditionally understood as 'tourism.' In juxtaposition to the above quotation, the concept of a 'working-holiday' seems a bizarre contradiction in terms. Through a discussion of tourism and work, in this chapter I examine the ways in which working-holidays are paradoxical. Through this exercise it will be shown that many commonly-held understandings of tourism and travel are inadequate with regards explaining the lifestyle, experiences and motivations of Canadian working-holidaymakers. This in turn illustrates a need for a further questioning of dichotomies, which treat 'work' and 'leisure' as mutually exclusive categories.

Conceptualizing Tourism: A Brief Overview

In a prominent publication, John Urry elaborates on the abovementioned statement by claiming that "the places gazed upon [by tourists] are for purposes not directly connected with paid work, and they normally offer some distinctive contrasts with work (both paid and unpaid)" (2002: 3). Adherence to this notion that work and leisure are separate categories is a fundamental element of a significant portion of the theory on tourism, and should be kept in mind in regard to the following.

One significant school of thought regarding contemporary tourism can broadly be referred to as that of 'post-modern' tourism. Advocates of this field of thought suggest that contemporary tourists are actively seeking fabricated experiences in the form of simulacra, or, to use Boorstin's term, 'pseudo-events' (Baudrillard: 1988, Boorstin: 1964, Bruner: 1989). In essence, this involves taking pleasure in visiting inauthentic, constructed alternative realities such as Disneyland, Medieval Times, or even a package-holiday resort in a poor country, where the environment within the resort complex may be starkly different than the one outside the resort community. Given a working-holiday necessarily involves integration into another authentic locale, it is of questionable relevance to the situation of working holidaymakers. At the very least, however, this branch of tourism theory supports Urry's definition of tourism as being both 'not work,' and being all about pleasure and fun.

Another, somewhat contradictory position suggests that tourism is not so much about seeking the fabricated as it is about seeking the authentic (see in particular MacCannell: 1976, 1999, also MacIntosh: 2003). This position has been particularly popular among theorists interested in backpackers and youth (May: 1995, Desforges: 1998, Gibson & Connell: 2003, Kristian & Jacobsen: 2000, Noy: 2004). Early branches of this school of thought –notably MacCannell- maintain that tourism is a reaction against the fragmented and alienating character of contemporary Western society; ostensibly we suppose that authentic ways of being and interacting with fellow humans and with the natural environment are to be found elsewhere. Some theorists have equated this search for the authentic with a modern-day sacred quest (Bauman: 1996, MacCannell: 1979: 42-48). Finally, some more recent theorists have postulated that there is a hierarchy attached

both to tourist destinations and to manners of travelling which provides a means of distinguishing between different types or classes of travellers (Desforges: 2000, Munt: 1994, Reilly: 1998, Sorensen: 2002, on class see Craik: 1995, Harrison: 2003).

The Working-Holiday: Tourism or Work?

Working-holidays are a lot of fun. The six months I spent in Edinburgh were among the most enjoyable of my life; I planned to stay four months, and stayed six. And after six months I came home reluctantly. During those six months I developed a life for myself which was in many ways like my day-to-day existence in other periods of my adult life; I had a preferred greengrocer, I topped up my mobile phone on Monday mornings, I budgeted to have rent for the 1.st I was on a first-name basis with the staff of a café, I had a library card and paid council tax. Moreover, I spent a decent portion of nearly everyday variously transcribing, working on reports, or writing fieldnotes. Those six months were by no means all play. That said, in ‘hanging-out’ anthropologist-style with other working-holidaymakers, my life was unusually social, and social outings were often tinged with a *joie-de-vivre* that was out of keeping with what I was used to at home. In some ways the working-holiday was like a vacation, and in some ways it wasn’t.

John Urry lists “fun, pleasure, and entertainment” (2002: 7) as being fundamental elements of tourism. These qualities certainly capture significant aspects of life for most working-holidaymakers whom I met in the UK. Indeed, for many working-holidaymakers it seemed that life in the United Kingdom involved a degree of hedonism and sociality that would be difficult to sustain both financially and socially over the long-term back in Canada, and which is perhaps more reminiscent of other, more stereotypical

forms of youth travel and tourism. For instance, partying and heavy drinking seemed particularly to play a significant role in the social life of many working-holidaymakers.^{34, 35} This is apparent in Cameron's account of his first few weeks in Scotland:

My first couple weeks here I did a lot of drinking, a lot of just getting to know the people, and stuff like that, and you imagine it's a hostel, there's a lot of young people here, and a lot of people saying 'lets go out for a few pints,' and, I didn't come over with a great budget, but I ended up drinking quite a bit, and drinking my budget away quite quickly.

As Cameron makes apparent, the hostel environment where he was living was particularly conducive to this hedonistic lifestyle. Indeed, another member of staff at the same hostel once told me quite succinctly that "getting pissed is part of life around here." Moreover, although there were eighteen live-in staff at the hostel where Scott worked, the majority of the individuals passing through the hostel were engaged in more transient, touristic travel. There seemed to be little social division between young people who were merely passing through the hostel as guests and those who worked for their accommodation, which meant that the hostel workers were often easily enticed into partying with guests. This made the lifestyle of most hostel-workers quite hedonistic indeed.

That said, a number of people who lived in flats also commented on their boozy lifestyle. For example, Brett lived in a flat in the city centre with his girlfriend (another Canadian working-holidaymaker), and five other people variously of Scottish, Polish, and

³⁴ Although such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, it may also be relevant that alcohol plays a more significant part in social interactions in Scotland more generally than it does in Canadian society. Aside from the associations often made between alcohol and Britain, this observation held true in my interactions with British friends, flatmates, and acquaintances.

³⁵ Bellis *et al.* 2007 have found a marked increase in alcohol consumption relative to home among long-term backpackers of British origin in Australia. Although focused on British youth aged 18-35, their findings support what I witnessed among most working-holidaymakers in the UK.

Spanish citizenship. When asked how he got along with his fellow staff at the bar where he worked as a chef, he replied:

I get along really well with all of them, especially the head chef who's now leaving. He was pretty much my best friend here in Scotland, so I'm upset that's he's leaving to go up north to Aberdeen. Him and I got along really well, got together few times a week, drank some beers, hung out. As for the other people, we usually hang out, get together at least once a week, go to the bar together, do some heavy drinking, 'cause that's what you do best in Scotland. Also, with the Brazilian KP that also just left, we used to hang out with him for quite a while. So yeah, it's pretty good. I get along really well with everyone.

Similarly, Jill lived with four Australians in a five-bedroom flat. When asked about her daily routine, she described the following:

I get up, go to work at half-eight, work until five, probably go out for a couple after-work bebies, go back home, probably go out again. I'm a bit of a partier. Yeah, and go to bed around 3:30, get up at 8. (...) [On the weekends] I'd like to say I do a lot of things, but usually I end up sitting on the couch being hung-over.

When Work IS Leisure:

In an analysis of resort workers in Hawaii, Adler and Adler (1999) argue that resort hotels provide unique and valuable environments in which to study work and leisure, “because they stand at a pivotal point in the leisure-work nexus: they manufacture and service leisure for their clients” (1999: 370). Although I have found virtually no literature on the subject, their argument is just as relevant with regards to individuals who work in leisure environments such as tourist bars and backpacker hostels. The irony of this sort of work, however, is that these so-called leisure employees are employed partially to make it seem as though work is far away. In the words of Bryman (1999) workers in these industries must:

Convey a sense that the employee is not engaged in work, so that the consumer is not reminded of the world of work and can get on with the happy task of buying, eating, gambling, and so on.

This notion is taken slightly further by Guerrier and Abib (2003) in a discussion of British tour reps in Spain. Based on qualitative research among these tour reps, they illustrate that not only do leisure-workers walk a fine line between work and leisure when on the job, the boundary between work and leisure is often so vague that one's time off often involved many of the same elements as work. Their findings resonate strongly with situation of working-holidaymakers who worked in the leisure industry. Even when these individuals were not technically 'on the job,' some individuals who worked in this industry were still in some senses restricted by the role that they were expected to perform in their job. For instance, the night that I arrived in Edinburgh I was pressured by an assistant manager –despite my tiredness- into accompanying a group from the hostel to a backpacker bar for 'hostel challenge.' Hostel challenge took place every Tuesday night, and was essentially a series of competitive drinking games between teams from different hostels. The prize for the winning team was, not surprisingly, more alcohol. The team from our hostel consisted of a haphazard mix of paid staff -both assistant managers were there-, unpaid staff who worked for their accommodation, and guests such as myself. There was fairly equal participation from each group in the various tasks that were assigned.

Over the course of the evening, I noticed that Keith, one of the assistant managers, was being particularly generous with buying rather foul-looking shots for hostel guests and employees. He was also clearly enjoying the festivities, and recounted that he was not looking forward to having to work at 8 am the following

morning. To the naive observer, it would seem as though Keith was merely an outgoing man who enjoyed the company of his employees and guests so much that he was glad to spend his free time ‘partying’ with them.

As I got to know Keith better I learned that my initial observation was rather superficial. Although he certainly enjoyed himself at activities such as ‘hostel challenge,’ there was often more to it than that. For instance, Keith once explained to me that as an assistant manager he felt some responsibility for ensuring that hostel guests had a good time in Edinburgh, and that he often encouraged them to participate in events like hostel challenge, as he had encouraged me. Moreover, as both assistant hostel manager and employee of the backpacker bar where the challenge was held,³⁶ he received a fifty-percent discount on drinks. He explained that he often bought twenty shots for twenty pounds, and shared them around as he had at hostel challenge. In his opinion, this was one way of ensuring that guests had a good time, and also that his employees thought of him as a ‘good guy.’

The blurring of work and leisure in this context is evident. On the one hand, Keith was choosing to spend his unpaid leisure time not only socializing with but also spending money on hostel staff and guests. At the same time, however, Keith was aware of his position in relation to the guests and employees of the hostel, and interacted with both in a way that was congruent with his work relationship to both. Furthermore, over the course of our friendship I learned that this blurring of work and leisure was in fact

³⁶ Keith was employed to run ‘Quiz Night,’ which took place every Monday.

oftentimes difficult for Keith to reconcile.³⁷ For instance, when asked about the relationship that Keith had with the hostel staff, Keith commented in a rather wry tone:

You have those that you absolutely dislike starting at one end of the spectrum, and you work with them, and you ask them to do their job and do your best to help them do their job, and you just stay out of each others' way. The next level is general acquaintance, who you're friendly with in the hostel, you hang out, you joke around, but you probably wouldn't go out with them to the pub or whatever. The next ones you have are your good friends that you make that you hope are around for a while, you go out to the pub together, you have a good time. And they're the ones that you're probably going to keep in touch with when you leave. Whereas the general acquaintances probably not so much. And then you have your physical, which sometimes turns into emotional relationships, and that happens a lot as well, you know? Just because people are travelling, and sometimes they get lonely, and people living in a hostel, it's going to happen, I mean we're all young adults, so it's...and you know, if you're having to handle that the next day it's not always convenient to avoid someone or to talk to someone in private because it's a hostel... Let just say we've all made mistakes. And you learn from them. You try not to get physically or emotionally involved with your staff, because that's a huge faux-pas in my mind, but, like I said, living with people, especially at night when neither of you are working and you have a few bebies and you just wanna be with someone, that seems like a great idea at the time. And then the next day when they do a shit job vacuuming you gotta say 'hey, you did a shit job vacuuming,' and when they're like 'what about last night?' and you're like 'nah, the two aren't related.' You know, it's not that easy. That's exactly it, you did a shit job with the toilets, you know? 'Well what about last night?' 'Last night was good, and maybe we'll do it again, but right now you gotta clean those toilets.'

Indeed, over the course of six months I observed a change in Keith's behaviour, socially-speaking; he became more inclined to seek the company of a select few – oftentimes local- friends, and to go to the cinema, out for dinner, or for long walks rather than to spend all his social time at the backpacker bar, or in the social spaces of the hostel.

³⁷ For further discussion of the difficulties faced by tourism staff in reconciling the work and leisure aspects of their lives, see Gurrier & Abib (2003), and Adler & Adler (1999).

Keith was not the only person who found this blurring of work and leisure rather challenging. Trevor, who had taken a working-holiday in both the Republic of Ireland and in Scotland had worked initially in bars and pubs, and mostly alongside travellers:

Most of the people I've worked with are travellers. As for the ones who are here right now in Edinburgh, or when they were in Westport, or Galway, or Killarney, in all those places I would never have met them if I hadn't worked in the workplace with them.

Initially he had found it quite "brilliant" to be working in pubs, and had enjoyed working with foreigners because:

There's normally a little more to say when they're travellers, because they have more stories and more recommendations of places to go and see, and since they're travellers they're normally quite open-minded as well, as up for anything.

Over the course of a year, however, Trevor had gotten overwhelmed with this lifestyle, and recounted that although he never imagined himself liking a nine-to-five job, he now preferred it to the pub-work, because it he finds it easier to leave his job at the office.

As these examples show, for individuals who work in the leisure industry, there is considerably blurring between what constitutes work and what constitutes leisure, especially with regards to social relations. This boundary is blurred even further, however, when employers deliberately take actions which encourage their employees to use their workspace as a leisure space. The abovementioned example of the backpacker bar offering Keith a discount on alcohol is one example of this. Similarly, the staff of backpacker hostels which sold bus tour packages are entitled to participate in bus tours for free, and the Edinburgh Fringe office gave free tickets to

shows to hostel staff who managed to sell tickets to their guests.³⁸ Perhaps the best example of such deliberate blurring on the part of employees, however, is the case of bars that offered generous drink vouchers to their employees as rewards for hard work. Such tactics seemed effective in encouraging staff to use their work-space as a space of leisure, as shown in the following tale. Moreover, aside from illustrating this phenomenon, other aspects of the grey boundary between work and leisure are apparent.

It was a Saturday evening in late summer, during the Fringe Festival. Although it was going on eleven pm, the sun was just setting as I picked my way through crowds of revellers on my way to the Black Hart Tavern. The Black Hart is a picturesque old pub located towards the end of a long string of pubs and bars, and dramatically nestled right below Edinburgh Castle. During much of the year it caters primarily to students and stag and hen parties. During August however, the clientele consists disproportionately of tourists.

I had been invited out for the evening by my friend Ethan, a twenty-three year old American whom I had met in the youth travel centre. He worked as an assistant chef at the Black Hart, and had conveyed to me earlier that the company that owned the Black Hart also owned four other bars in Edinburgh. Each month this company allocated a few vouchers to the managers of each of these bars, with the assumption that they would be handed out to particularly outstanding staff as rewards for jobs well done. These vouchers entitled the holder to an 80 pound running bar tab, at which point the voucher-holder was required to pay 40 pounds. Ethan had explained

³⁸ Ironically, in one such case a hostel employee used his ten free tickets to take his preferred guests to Fringe shows, having been given those tickets because he had been so successful at selling tickets to guests with whom he maintained more formal, host-guest relations.

to me that his friend and fellow chef, Brett, had been awarded one of these vouchers, and was cashing it in at the Black Hart that night. I had been invited to help polish off eighty pounds worth of beer.

As I approached the Black Hart I began to worry that I might have some difficulty locating Ethan. A very loud, large crowd had spilled out onto the street in front of the bar, making it challenging even to reach the door. I feared that the bouncers would not even let me into the pub, given it must have been full well beyond capacity. In the end I managed to edge my way past the party-goers, and make my way inside.

I managed to locate Ethan surprisingly quickly, because he and his work-mates had managed to save a strategic table at the front of the house. He was seated with his friend Thane – a fellow American with whom he had come to the UK,- a young woman whom I soon learned was his visiting sister, and four young men who were introduced variously as off-duty bartenders and chefs. They had clearly been there for a while by the time I arrived. The wobbly table was absolutely covered with empty pint glasses, and coated with a cloudy meniscus of beer that spilled off the edges onto unsuspecting laps whenever someone leaned on it. One young man whom I would later learn was Canadian working-holidaymaker was in particularly good spirits; he had a young woman on his lap who seemed bent on being the sole focus on his attention.

I sat down next to Ethan, and had barely been introduced around the table when a pint of beer appeared in front of me. Apparently one of the off-duty bartenders had by-passed the very long line at the bar in order to procure me a

beverage. The evening wore on in a festive vein. The bar was far too loud and crowded for me to be able to follow all of the conversations taking place at the table. As a result, I spent most of the evening talking to Ethan, who conspiratorially explained that the couple across the table were in fact causing a bit of a scandal, both because the girl was a bartender, and the guy –who worked with Ethan in the kitchen- already had a girlfriend. While sexual –and occasionally emotional- relationships among the staff were not uncommon, the situation at hand was apparently rather unsavoury, because the girlfriend often came to the bar for free food.

Our table was one of the last to vacate once the bar closed around 3 am. Indeed, we cleared out only after several of the off-duty –and quite inebriated- bartenders got into an argument with the bouncers; the bartenders felt that since they were staff and knew the bouncers personally, they ought to be able to use that familiarity to allow them to stay behind and continue drinking after the bar had closed. The bouncers did not agree, and eventually succeeded in ushering the bartenders out.

Several elements of the above story illustrate the degree to which the boundaries between work and leisure were blurred for the staff of the Black Hart Tavern. Most significantly, in using a drink voucher that they had received from their establishment the staff were using their work space as a space of leisure. Moreover, in allocating vouchers, their employer had ensured that the bar would be used as both a work and leisure space for its employees. It is also noteworthy, however, that even when off-duty the staff was able to use their status as employees to their advantage,

for instance in bypassing the bar queue. Finally, for the staff in this story, their co-workers clearly played a significant part in each others' social networks.

Balancing Work and Leisure

While for some individuals the nature of their jobs were such that work and leisure were oftentimes difficult to distinguish, others managed to balance touristic activities around more conventional full-time work schedules. For instance, Carla, who worked nine-to-five in the office of a renowned restaurant, wine, bar and delicatessen sums up the act of balancing touristic and 'local' activities well:

I start work at 8 o'clock in the morning. Every morning. So I go to work, and usually I like to go out on my lunch hour, because where I work is not too far from the mall the shops? So it's nice to just kind of take a walk. Sometimes I can do errands, because banks aren't open on weekends, which is really annoying. And after work I've started doing more going-out things kind of idea, I've started doing yoga once a week, so that's kind of new, and sometimes I go and do pub-quiz with my friends. Which we don't have in Canada, so that's new. And then on the weekends I actually try to do things, like check things off my list of things to see and stuff like that. Arthur's Seat³⁹ was one of them. Which was, like, really nice, but a really hard hike. Because we went up, we went up the hard way. We didn't realise there was an easy way. But mostly things around the city. Like the new parliament and stuff like that. Like anyone I can rope into me, if they wanna see the sights as well. I obviously I went to Skye. So I've got like a list of things to do.

Similarly Emily, who works as a receptionist for a bus tour company worked nine-to-five during the week, but made full use of her weekends to do more touristic activities:

I wake up at about half-six, I shower, get ready, I'm usually at work for either eight or nine? And then I work at [the bus tour company] until either five or six each day. And then I usually will just either go out for a drink with a friend, or ah, go out for dinner with someone? I don't usually just go home after work,

³⁹ Arthur's Seat is a large, picturesque hill which overlooks downtown Edinburgh. The views from the top are quite spectacular, and climbing to the top on a sunny day is a popular activity for both visitors and locals alike.

like I usually go, will go have a meal with someone else? And then I would usually just go home for about ten o'clock and go to sleep. So I'm kind-of boring. But on the weekend I try and get out of town. And so I live for the weekend. For instance I went to 'T in the park'⁴⁰ last weekend and stuff. But yeah, typically I just kind-of work, and then will go out and have drinks or food with someone after work, and then go home.

The Ordinary Versus the Extraordinary

Beyond the binary division in literature between leisure and work, contemporary understandings of tourism also imply a binary relationship between the 'ordinary' and the 'extraordinary' (Urry: 2002, Robinson 1976). The experiences of several working holidaymakers lead me to question the bald validity of this statement. For some, it seemed that part of the purpose of going on a working holiday was to truly and holistically establish a *life* in new place. In other words, some individuals hoped that through longer-term working holiday, the extraordinary might become ordinary. Madison is a prime example of this:

I'd done a lot of backpacking, moving around, but I wanted to go to another country and actually become part of the community, and like, know the city well enough to get around, and not just be a tourist, like be a local. My ultimate goal was to feel like a local in the city. And like I feel like that. Like I know roughly my way around everywhere, and where the best places to eat are, and that sort of thing. I didn't want to feel like a foreigner.

Similarly, in mid-October Anna, a close friend and working-holidaymaker from Australia flew to Paris, with a return flight booked from Hamburg three weeks later. She had worked several jobs at several different festivals over the course of the summer and early fall, and planned to travel from Paris through Belgium to Germany with some of the money that she had saved. To my surprise, however, she phoned me two weeks later saying that she had decided to forgo Germany, and had flown back to Edinburgh from

⁴⁰ "T In The park" is a major music festival that takes place annually near Kinross, in central Scotland.

Brussels instead. A few hours later, around her kitchen table consuming wine and chocolate she stated simply:

I think I'm over backpacking. After two weeks in hostels, moving every second day I was just like "I just want to chill in Edinburgh, cook food and drink wine with my flatmates." And anyway, it was supposed to be rain all week in Hamburg.

The Working-Holiday as a Means of Escaping Work

Perhaps the most significant irony with regards to the place of work within the 'working-holiday' is that a number of individuals listed work-related concerns as being a major factor in their decision to work abroad. For instance, a number of newly-graduated individuals recounted that they did not want to go straight into the workforce, and thought that a working-holiday would allow them to postpone this for a significant amount of time:

Brian: I didn't really want to start working right after I graduated. I had friends who did, and they seemed kinda miserable. And I had money saved up. I think many people start working 'cause they're in debt, type thing, and if I was in debt I probably would have as well, but I had money saved up, and I wanted to do something else before finding a career, so figured this was the best thing for that.

Obviously, Brian means something more complex than simply not wanting to work point-blank. After all, during his working-holiday he worked very hard both at finding a job, and in his job once he found it. Indeed, the job that Brendan found involved long, lonely, physically-demanding hours in a warehouse that stocked school uniforms, and his dislike of the job was so strong that he eventually quit. Nonetheless he viewed his working holiday experience as extremely valuable, and highly-enjoyable in and of itself.

Somewhat related to Brian's desire to avoid getting a 'real' job by taking a working-holiday is individuals' desire to deliberately avoid taking jobs in their field of expertise. David, for instance, recounted to me that although he held a degree in Industrial Engineering, finding work in his field was not why he had come to the UK. Indeed, David recounted that he did not want to find work in his field, because he felt that the demands of such a job would interfere with the primary purpose of his trip, which was to hike in Scotland and to travel to other parts of Europe. Similarly, when asked if her job related to her previous work-experience, Kristal replied with the following:

No. I wasn't planning on getting a job that did, actually. I didn't want to work at an office while I was over here, just 'cause I thought that would kinda be boring, and when I get back home my job is most likely going to be an office job, so I wanted my time here to be fun, and casual, and relaxed. Instead of what it would be back home.

And finally, another interesting element of the working-holiday is the case of individuals who chose a working-holiday due to dissatisfaction with their work-life in Canada. For example, when asked why she had decided to pursue a working-holiday, Lindsay, who had worked for a number of years at a large bank, explained that she was feeling considerable pressure from her 'higher-ups' to take management courses which would give her the credentials necessary to be promoted again. For Lindsay, this pressure caused her to reflect on the kind of future she wanted, and ultimately to decide that she did not see herself as a bank-manager later on. Needless to say, her colleagues were quite surprised when she quit her job and sold her house, and took a job as assistant-manager of a hostel in Edinburgh. Despite this drastic change, she nonetheless related nonchalantly:

[I wanted] *Just change of scenery, I guess. Get away from professional life for a little while, do something different, see new things, meet people.*

Despite a considerable body of academic literature suggesting otherwise, the practice of viewing work and leisure as contradictory in the context of travel seems at best questionable and ironic when one considers the context of working-holidaymakers. This chapter has explored various ways in which Canadian working-holidaymakers in Edinburgh challenges conventional and theoretical notions of work and tourism as mutually exclusive practices.

Chapter 6: What they Take Away

I have suggested elsewhere that for many working-holidaymakers, going abroad can useful be understood as a rite of passage to the extent that the decision to travel coincides with transitional life-stages, and may therefore be usefully viewed within a framework which considers the larger life-plans of these individuals. In this chapter I explore this issue through a discussion of what the working-holidaymakers whom I studied ‘take away’ from their experience abroad. Specifically, I focus on three issues: reflections on the future possibility of spending extended periods abroad, how working-holidaymakers felt that they had changed as a result of their sojourn abroad, and the relationship between their working-holiday experience and future career plans.

Before discussing the ways in which many working-holidaymakers situated their extended working-holiday in relation to future travel plans, it is useful to note that literally every working-holidaymaker whom I met, Canadian or otherwise, planned to travel later in life. Indeed, when asked how they felt about travelling, many people responded with unrivalled enthusiasm. The following are just a few of the many glowing responses that I received:

Jill: I love [travelling]. I absolutely love it. There's nothing else I'd rather do.

Derek: Very good. I'm having a lot of fun. Sometimes I get homesick, but that's to be expected, but for the most part I can definitely see myself doing more and more of it.

Brian: Oh, it's great! I was thinking of, it would be just, a good summer type thing, but now I think I'm going to travel so much more, see so much more of the world. It's a great experience.

Although virtually everyone expected to travel later in life, however, quite a few individuals felt that their future travel would most likely be in a different capacity than their working-holiday. In essence, these individuals did not imagine themselves pursuing extended trips abroad, and did not anticipate that their future travels would involve such settled activities as working and leasing apartments. In most cases these individuals rationalized that they would soon be prioritizing activities such as establishing careers and families, and they felt that these commitments would conflict with extended sojourns overseas. For instance, when I asked Derek if he would consider this sort of extended holiday again, he replied:

At one point I would have said yes, but probably not, because I think when I get home I'm going to start wanting to get my life on track with getting into an ad agency, and furthering my design [career] . I may work abroad if an ad agency puts me abroad, or a really good opportunity comes up in another country in my field. But other than that I don't think I'll do another working holiday.

And likewise, in response to the same question:

Lindsay: Probably not, no. Just because you eventually at some point have to get into your job, and get married, and have kids, and do all of that. And once you have kids, to do extended travel would be difficult. So it may be in retirement, it's a possibility, but not in the next twenty years, no.

Kristal: My plans when I get home are to start a career, and settle down, and so I don't think that I would ever leave on an extended trip like this again. I think a month would be the longest if I could ever, like afford to do that. I'd like to continue to travel, but it would be more like, you know, vacation type.

Kristal herself even recognised that she had fit travel into a larger life-plan, as shown in the following:

I've always kinda known what I wanted. I'm a huge planner, so I think about my future a lot. I planned out everything from the fact that I'm on this trip to what I'm going to do when I get home, like I already know about apartment-hunting and finding a job and stuff like that. I've already I set money aside so that I

would have money when I get home for my first month of apartment, and damage deposit and everything like that, so...I planned all that ahead. And I know that I won't be staying longer than my plans for going home in July.

It bears mention, however, that although many individuals did not imagine themselves travelling in the same long-term capacity in foreseeable future they nonetheless shared in the enthusiasm with regards future travel, and hoped to vacation abroad later in life:

Kristal: I definitely know now that I'm bitten by the travel bug. I know that it'll definitely be in my plans for the future, except I know that next time I travel anywhere it'll be with family or my boyfriend or something. I'd rather experience certain things with the people I love.

Madison: I mean there's tons of places I still want to see. I don't think I'm going to be able to do another trip of this level again, just because, I'm hoping to be a little more stable. You know, buy a house and things like that, and you can't just pick up and leave for a year when you do that, I guess you could, but it'd be a lot trickier. So yeah, more of just like the touristy thing than the working holiday thing?

Although these abovementioned individuals who foresaw themselves settling down with careers and partners once they returned to Canada, there were also some who *did* plan on going on extended periods abroad later on. The situation of these individuals is also interesting when examined in the context of their more far-reaching life-plans. To elaborate, of these individuals who anticipated future travel, many were pursuing career-paths which they felt would be useful to them in finding work abroad. For instance, one young woman who was pursuing a degree in radio broadcasting hoped to be able to find overseas work in her field once she finished her studies. When asked if she would consider another extended travel or work-abroad she replied:

Emily: Yes, definitely. Definitely. I would, yeah. If I had to choose a place, I would probably try to go somewhere, perhaps, like Holland? Or Finland or

somewhere, somewhere in Europe? Where they have English-speaking radio stations, where I could work there?

Similarly one young woman who was soon to begin a teaching degree anticipated being able to combine travel and work in finding teaching degrees abroad:

Alison: I plan after getting my teaching degree to go to Korea and maybe teach, and maybe pay off all my student loans and debts, and travel around Asia.

Moreover, the fact that one woman came to the UK through a program which places Canadian teachers in teaching jobs is evidence that some individuals with teaching credentials can and do use their skills as a means of pursuing extended stays abroad. It bears mention that this woman was open to the possibility of accepting another overseas teaching position, if the opportunity arose. Interestingly, this same woman pointed out that, work-placements aside, the structure of the academic year means that she may be able to travel for several months out of each year:

I would love to see Australia and New Zealand, and I would love to see South-East Asia? I would love to see everywhere, basically. But it'll all come. One of the bonuses of being a teacher is I figure, if I make it a priority, even if I am living in Canada, if I plan and save then during my summer vacation I could do what I wanted to do.

Aside from these abovementioned individuals who hoped to use their credentials to secure future work abroad there were also a number of younger individuals who hoped to pursue careers which would allow them to travel:

Karen: I absolutely love [travelling]. Could do it my entire life. I would love to find a career that allows me to do it.

Pierre-Olivier: Mais carrément, c'est vraiment, je veut dire, ah, oui maintenant j'ai commencée a voyager, je me voie mal arrêter. C'est certain q'en revenant du Canada, puis en trouvant un travail dans mon domaine, c'est sure que je vais trouver quelque choses, je sait pas moi, écrire a

l'étranger? C'est sur, oui, oui, oui. Une fois qu'on commence on peut plus s'arrêter.

Jill: Just basically all I want to do, all I want to focus on all of my life is travelling. It's going to incorporate into my job and all that.

Since individuals such as these were on the younger end of the spectrum and had not focused on particular career paths, it is difficult to speculate as to whether they will follow through with their plans to pursue careers which allow them such mobility. Regardless of whether they will continue their mobile lifestyle, however, it is interesting to note that each of these three abovementioned individuals was at a crossroads in life when they made the decision to embark on their working holiday; both Karen and Jill were uncertain that the subjects that they were studying university were truly what they were interested in, and Pierre-Oliver was feeling directionless having, just finished a BA.

At this point it is useful to delve a little further into a discussion of working-holidaymakers' plans for the future. As illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, a number of people planned to establish careers and families upon their return to Canada. It is perhaps not surprising that the majority of these individuals were on the older end of the working-holidaymaker spectrum, having already acquired either postsecondary degrees, work experience, or both. The situation of younger individuals who had left school to travel was rather different; very few of these individuals anticipated pursuing careers and stable relationships upon their return. Rather, most of these individuals admitted that the next step for them would be to pursue postsecondary study. For example,

Tim: More and more I realise that I think I do want to go to school. I like the idea of it more and more, the idea of going and actually really studying something, really getting immersed in a given subject. I just haven't gotten any closer to finding out what that subject is.

Jill's situation provides an interesting example of an individual who thought about her work-abroad in relation to the larger spectrum of what she anticipated doing with her life. As the following quote illustrates, she recognised that completing her studies was the next step for her, and made the decision to stay longer in the UK than she had initially planned in part because she did not feel ready to make that step:

I'm not ready to go back to school. I know what I want to do, but I'm not ready to go back and actually sit down and focus on it. If I go back now I'm pretty sure that I wouldn't give it my all? Whereas this way, I'm learning a lot about myself, I'm learning a lot more about what I specifically want to do with my life, and when I go home I know I can sit down and focus on my studies, get it all done with, and then get out there and do what I want to do.

Similar to Jill, Jane felt that pursuing her studies was an important component of her future plans. Moreover, as is shown in the following she had an idea of an acceptable timeframe in which to complete her studies, and was finding it difficult to fit her future plans into this limited period:

Jane: I know that I'm putting school off a lot. But it's just because I'm not ready to go? And I'm very self-aware, so I will know when I want to go. I'm starting to kind-of have it in mind a little bit? Just in the way that I feel, now I've come into myself and I'm glad with who I am, it's kind-of like now I'm kinda ready to take on a new challenge. The moving out thing was scary, but I've done that, and I've handled it well, and now I'm kinda ready to maybe go the next step, and start a career kind of thing. So, I mean Australia, I really want to do. I don't know if I'll stay there a whole year. I really don't. But that's a long way off. By the time I come back it'll be 2008 or something. I'll be twenty-four or something, and just starting school? I don't know if I want to be that old starting? So I don't know if I'll do that. But I also want to do, I really would love to work in a resort, you know, and just kinda do that kind of thing for a while, just chill out. So I don't know...

Jane's situation elucidates some of the points that I have been making throughout this thesis as a whole. On the one hand, having pursued a working-holiday has helped her make the transition to feeling confident in herself as an independent young adult.

Moreover, her feeling pressure to begin her studies before she gets ‘too old’ highlights the pressures that exist both to pursue such valued credentials as post-secondary education, and also to travel while one is young.

At this point I would like to return to the notion of liminality. As discussed in the introduction, liminal –and liminoid- states are characterized by change. In a discussion of what working-holidaymakers takeaway from their experience, it is interesting to explore the ways in which these individuals were affected by their experience abroad. Although there were many different situations discussed, it is sufficient to state most working-holidaymakers felt that they had changed on a personal level, and that most of what they were taking away from the experience is a sense of self-development and self-confidence. Indeed, if there is one thing which I could generalize regarding the working-holiday experience, an increase in self-confidence would be it.

For example:

Derek: I think its all-in-all making me. I've always had strong social skills, but I think its making me even stronger. I think I'm becoming a better people person, better able to relate with people. I think this whole travelling experience and working abroad is making me more confident in my ability to succeed on my own, I guess? I think its giving me a lot of strong assets for the future and that. For the most part confidence I think, its really helping confidence.

Fiona: I was a little nervous coming over? Not sure what to expect, not sure how smoothly the process of, you know, setting up a bank account, getting a flat, meeting people, all that type stuff, how smoothly that would go. I was a little anxious about it. But now I feel a bit more comfortable, so I feel more confident. (...)I think just the mere fact that I'm capable of doing anything like, that, um, I guess it gets back to that confidence thing, that if I put my mind to something, its really not that hard.

Closely related to increased self-confidence is the degree to which individuals that they had become more independent while abroad. This is significant in the context of travel as a rite of passage, because several individuals related their increased independence to having matured as individuals. For instance:

Jane: I know it sounds cheesy, but I kind-of found myself here? I came into myself. At home I was just out of high school, there was still that very-much mainstream way to dress, and way to act, and who to be friends with, and what music to listen to, and all that kind of stuff. But coming over here, and being abroad, and breaking away from the people that I grew up with allowed me to kind-of grow into myself. So that's probably the best thing I could take away.

Rachel: It's changed the way I see things, I guess? Yeah, I find that I'm more independent now. I've been in situations where, I've had to think quickly, and say "well, um, how am I going to react, and just, you know, you learn a lot. So yeah, I just find that I've matured a lot. And discovered more about myself too, I guess.

Working-Holiday: A Career-Asset?

Since working-holidays necessarily have a work component, it is interesting to see what people see themselves taking away from the experience career-wise. Asking about this, however brought about some extremely diverse responses. It is interesting to note that although the youth travel agency sells its programs as career-assets, with the exception of Kayla who came through a teacher-placement program, most individuals did not have it in mind to gain work-related experience through their working-holiday. Indeed, when asked whether the work-abroad experience would be an asset career-wise, several individuals pointed stated that career-advancement was not why they were there:

Tim: No, not really [an asset]. I'm working in a hostel, but it's not that different from anything like you don't really learn that much from it? Like you get that 'well-rounded individual' kind of thing, but its very...so maybe not my job in particular, but say if you work in a coffee shop in Scotland or you work in a

coffee shop in Ottawa, its different but its not that different? To the point where it's going to, it's not going to, it don't see it helping a career or anything. I don't see it doing anything really. That's not really why I'm doing this.

Moreover, some felt optimistic that it might be an asset to them, but conceded that any career-advantage that their work-abroad might give them is more of an incidental added-bonus than anything else:

Brian: Yeah, I think it will [be an asset]. That's not why I'm here, but I've read before that employers like to know if you've travelled to Europe type thing, before they hire you, 'cause if they hire someone in their, like, low-to-mid twenties, there's a strong possibility that they might want to travel later, like to leave work for like a couple months at a time. And I've read that if you have something like that on your resume, where you've already been over for, I don't know, four or five months, they might be more likely to hire you. Especially for office positions.

Cameron: I think so. Not that I'm interested in going into the bar or restaurant business, I just think that it's just good for maybe my personal gain. Like getting to talk to people, especially from foreign countries a little better, just communication-wise and stuff like that, I just think it'll be a good experience. I think an experience with various different cultures always helps you understand, maybe not just the world a little better but also yourself a little better, and what you want to do with your life and stuff like that.

Interestingly, several individuals recounted that they had been told by previous employers that experience working abroad would put them at the advantage in the job-market. For example, Rachel had initially come to Edinburgh for nine months on a working-holiday, and had returned to New Brunswick for the better part of a year before returning to Edinburgh again to work for the remainder of her visa. In an interview she recounted the following:

Even now when I went back the first time I was here, I found it looks really good because employers were like 'oh, well you know, you're able to adapt to new environments, or, you know, it just shows I guess that certain degree of maturity, that 't'est capable d'entreprendre une bonne chose,' you know?

And similarly Kristal, who had temporarily left a position as a marketing coordinator for a large fast-food chain explained that her employer told her that having worked abroad would “*look well*” on her resume because it shows that she has the initiative to seek new experiences. Moreover, before leaving for the UK, Kristal had been assured that there would be a job for her in marketing when she returned. In her case, at least, taking time to work abroad seemed to be an acceptable –if not advantageous- career-move.

Cases like Rachel and Kristal are interesting to consider when examined in relation to the accounts of individuals such as Lindsay. Lindsay was one of the eldest individuals whom I interviewed, and correspondingly had more experience in the workforce than most. Indeed, prior to her working-holiday she had occupied a managerial position at a large bank, where she had worked for nearly four years. Although more established in a conventionally adult life-style than many of the individuals whom I studied, Lindsay nonetheless had a commonality with these younger working-holidaymakers in that she was at crossroads in her life; she felt pressured by her ‘big bosses’ to take the management courses which would allow her to move up to an even more senior position at the bank, and was contemplating a career-change because she did not see this as being the future that she wanted for herself. It had come as quite a surprise to her co-workers when she quit her job, sold her house, and assumed a position as assistant-manager of a backpackers’ hostel in Edinburgh. By the time we met, she had moved up to the position of manager of this hostel. In reflecting upon her decision, she remarked:

Professionally it’s obviously not that great of a career move, [laughs] it’s not really fabulous on your resume to work your way up, and then leave and come

back and so, its not a career move, its just to get experience. Life experience, I guess. I think, in a way it will be an experience, but, I've interviewed a lot of people, and gone through the hiring process, and if I had seen that on someone's resume I certainly wouldn't have seen it as an asset for them. And they were applying for entry-level positions. Into the bank. So applying to a management role where you walked away from something entirely and went into another continent entirely, just sort of spur-of-the-moment, I think at the hiring of a person, I would have to wonder a little bit about that. I think I'll be asked some pretty good questions in interviews about that when I get home and start applying for positions.

Lindsay's response is significant in several regards. Firstly, in asserting that as a hirer she would not have seen experience abroad as an asset for a job applicant, it suggests that experience abroad is not always the career-asset that Kirsten and Rachel have found it to be, nor that organizations such as the youth travel agency suggest it is. It is also interesting, however, when compared to the point-of-view of Keith, who was assistant manager of an affiliated hostel. Although Lisa and Keith held very similar jobs, unlike Lisa, Keith was adamant that his overseas experience as assistant-manager of a hostel would be a powerful asset in his future career in hospitality. When asked whether he thought his work-abroad experience would be an asset career-wise, he responded with the following:

Absolutely. No doubt in my mind. I mean, if you can be the assistant manager, the on-site, live-in assistant manager of a hostel with 160 beds, where some nights, I mean, people crap in the shower, people puke in the bathroom, people get drunk, you live with your employees, you have to train people constantly because of the high turnover rate, I mean these are all things that, I mean maybe you're not making multi-million dollar decisions of your hotel, like a general manager, but in terms of how you can try dealing with different problems and things, where this specifically relates to what I want my career to be, or what I think I want my career to be, then this can't not help. Because it gives me so much to talk about, I can't help but think that in future interviews I'm going to have so much to talk about, and how I dealt with problems and issues, and situations and stuff.

Unlike Keith, however, Lindsay's background was not in hospitality, and although she hoped to continue in managerial roles throughout her working life, she did not necessarily plan to work in hospitality.

Whether or not work-experience abroad will actually serve as a career asset for working-holidaymakers is beyond the scope of this thesis, and I am not trying to suggest that I have gathered enough evidence to make sound conclusions in that regard. What *does* come across through my research, however, is the trend that career-advancement was not a motivating-factor in most of my research subjects' decisions to pursue working-holidays.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

It is a cold Saturday evening in what could be any old pub in Edinburgh, and I am sitting at a table with four other young women, and one young man. And although the atmosphere is lubricated and jovial, my companions and I are comparatively sombre. I leave in a week, and Jessica returns to Canada in two days. At least Morgana, the Australian working-holidaymaker, will remain in Edinburgh for another six months. Nadia from Quebec will also stay out the length of her visa, which means another five months in the UK. Heather and Ian are both Scottish, and have no plans to leave Edinburgh anytime soon.

I turn to Ian, who is sitting to my right. Ian works full-time at a small, independently-owned café that I have been frequenting regularly for the past four months, and in that time we have become friends. He moved to Edinburgh from Inverness two years ago with a girlfriend, although they have since separated. Jessica is his co-worker, and Morgana is his neighbour. The following conversation takes place:

Kate: I can't believe I've been here nearly six months...

Ian: I can't believe I've been here nearly two years...

Kate: Are you glad you came?

Ian: Hell yeah! [pause] But it's getting to be hard being here, you know?

Kate: What, being far from Inverness?

Ian: *No. Inverness isn't far. There's just so much coming and going here, you know? It hurts. It sucks being left behind.*

(I do not really know what to say at this point. After all, people *do* come and go from Edinburgh all the time. I have been studying this phenomenon since I arrived six months ago. I am glad to be the one leaving, rather than the one left behind).

Kate: *Are you considering going away?*

Ian: *I need to go to Australia...*

(This comes as a surprise to me, given Ian has never mentioned a desire to go to Australia before).

Ian: *I know I want to go, I just need to stop fannying around and get myself organized. There's so many friends down there that I want to visit. But I feel like I've missed my chance, you know? Because all my friends, like all my friends from Inverness, they're there right now.*

Kate: *That's no reason not to go. You'll make new friends, especially travelling.*

Ian: *I know, I know. I'm not worried about that...*

Ian heads to the bar to get more beer.

Perhaps it seems strange to conclude a thesis about Canadian working-holidaymakers by recounting a conversation with a young Scotsman. I have included this conversation, however, because of the insight that Ian offers into the situation of working-holidaymakers in Edinburgh. The tone of the conversation was bittersweet. Ian had a close friendship with several of the women around the table; one was his

neighbour, another a co-worker, and another a welcome regular in the café where he worked. He was sad to be parting from friends who had become part of his routine, and we were sad to be leaving as well. Yet we all embodied the ironies of being a working-holidaymaker; we stuck around long enough and in such a settled capacity that they were able to establish close relationships with Ian, variously as friends, neighbours, and co-workers, yet lived our lives in Edinburgh with a degree of hedonism that was driven by a desire to do and see as much as our budget would allow in the time available. To view us through the theoretical framework of this thesis, our lifestyle in Edinburgh was tinged with a degree of liminoid license which was likely out of keeping with our daily lives in our respective home countries. This made us entertaining friends to have; indeed we might not have been such fun friends had Ian met us in our home-countries, studying for exams, chipping away at theses, or saving for the future. At the same time, however, having working-holidaymakers as close friends made Ian feel less content with his own job at the café; his job –and other jobs like it,- after all, was for his working-holidaymaker friends a way of financing a break from their regular expectations and routine. It was evident to him that although we often worked hard at our jobs and studies, nonetheless like the working-holidaymakers whom I have discussed throughout this thesis, our working-holiday was as much ‘holiday’ as it was ‘work’. . And finally, in concluding that he ‘needs to go to Australia’ but that he feels he has ‘missed his chance’ because all of these friends are there now, Ian touches upon both the fact that travel experience can be status-conferring for young people, and also that sojourns abroad tend to be conceived of within the larger framework of individuals’ life-cycle.

And so, following Ian's lead, I summarize what I have attempted to illustrate through this thesis. Through analysis of both my ethnographic data and existent literature on tourism, youth travel, and social capital, I have argued that with regards to Canadian working-holidaymakers in Edinburgh, travel is a self-imposed rite of passage which serves as a means of transitioning from one life-stage to another. Victor Turner's work on liminality and rites of passage, Graburn's work on tourism and change, Snow and Brisset's notion of 'pauses' and 'breaks' in social life, and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital resonate particularly strongly with my data, and have been elemental in constructing this argument. I have also explored the conventional relationship between work and leisure that is a feature of working-holidays, and have thereby proposed that working-holidays are both ironic, and also challenge the common theoretical assumption that tourism and work are mutually exclusive. In so doing, I hope to have contributed to academic knowledge concerning Canadian travellers, working-holidaymakers, and young travellers more generally, and also to the body of literature which considers tourism and work to be dichotomous.

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