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# Moms Away

*Exploring Finnish Mothers' Travel Risk Perception from an  
Ethnographic Perspective*

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TKAM01 - Spring 2013

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## Abstract

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The amount of trips abroad made by Finns every year has been increasing steadily for 15 years. However, how Finns perceive or manage risks related to travelling abroad is not well known. Traditionally, risk management has been studied as a separate part of the daily life of people. This thesis focuses on the notion that risk management in travel practices can be better understood by applying ethnographic methods and cultural theory. The aim of this thesis is to study how Finnish mothers' ideas about risk in conjunction with travelling shape the way they manage risks when travelling. To study this issue, in depth interviews were conducted with Finnish mothers guided by two themes: what ideals do the respondents relate to travelling and what risks do they associate with their travelling practices. The review of theory and previous research is introduced in order to; first, display how different social aspects influence risk perception, and second, to illustrate how exploring the respondents' travel habitus can be used to better understand the risk perception of respondents. Six key findings emerge from the discussion of empirical material. First, travelling abroad regularly is an ideal aspect of the life of Finnish mothers. Second, the respondents have a shared understanding of what ideal travel is like. Third, the most important risks that the respondents considered were equipment risk and physical risk, similar to findings of previous research. However, psychological risk, satisfaction risk and social risk are essentially linked to travelling practices. Fourth, the respondents' previous experience of travel and risks related to travel influenced how they perceived risks in the future. Fifth, the respondents had a shared image of how risks should be managed when travelling to Europe or outside of Europe and what is the role of travel health consultation. Finally, the respondents' subjective interests towards a destination affected how they perceived risks; if the respondents had a personal interest towards a destination, they were more likely to see possible risks related to the destination as manageable.

Keywords: risk perception; travel; risk management; mothers; children; habitus

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## 1. Introduction

“I have a traveller’s soul”

(Iris, personal communication, October 17th 2012)

“I kind of trust that things will go well”

(Minna, personal communication, September 24th 2012)

The number of trips abroad made by Finns has increased steadily over the past 15 years. In 2011 Finns made approximately 4.3 million trips abroad that included an overnight stay (Official Statistics of Finland, 2011a). However, the way Finnish travellers react to the potential risks of travelling abroad is not well known (Hyrynen, 2010). Aro, Vartti, Schreck, Turtiainen and Uutela (2009) studied 20-70-year-old Finnish men and women on their attitudes to health risks in conjunction with travelling to Asia. They found that the respondents were willing to take risks abroad, because trips abroad are supposed to be of a hedonistic, laidback nature. Is this an accurate representation of Finnish travellers? Do different groups of Finns have different attitudes surrounding risks related to travel?

To investigate risk perception and risk management of Finns, I interviewed Finnish mothers. What makes this group of respondents interesting is that they are mothers who travel with their children. Traditionally, young backpackers (especially males) are seen as adventurous and relaxed about risks related to travelling, while women are seen more cautious travellers (Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2007). Previous studies found that women from Asia, Australia, Europe, UK and the US were more likely to perceive travelling as involving higher risk and experience more anxiety towards travelling than men (Reisinger & Crofts, 2010). Also, previous studies have indicated that travelling with children influences risk perception. According to Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992), parents focus on risks related to the physical safety of the environment and need to make sacrifices when travelling with children; the children’s physical safety and well-being are put first and the parent’s hedonistic wants tend to end up on the backburner.

But are these findings still relevant to modern Finnish mothers?

The quotations in the beginning of the text are excerpts from the interviews conducted with the respondents that I interviewed for this thesis. Based on these statements what kinds of attitudes towards risk should we expect Finnish mothers to have? How do thoughts about risks affect the travelling practices of Finnish mothers? How does travelling with children affect risk perception?

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Finnish mothers conceive of risk while travelling abroad with children and how they translate their conceptions of risks into risk management strategies. This project was commissioned GlaxoSmithKline, a pharmaceutical company interested in gaining insight into how Finns perceive health risks and manage health risk when travelling abroad from a qualitative research perspective. By understanding how and why Finns take risks into account while travelling, communication about travel risks can be improved to a form which is relatable to the Finnish population. Although the original premise of the project was focused on health risks, this thesis focuses on investigating travel risks on a broader spectrum. In order to inspect what kind of status health risks have in the travel preparations of Finnish mothers, I investigate what different kinds of risks Finnish mothers think about when travelling abroad and how it affects their thoughts on travel preparations.

What risks do Finnish mothers think about in conjunction with travelling?

The definition of travelling, which is suitable for the purposes of this thesis, is trips abroad made on the spare time of individuals, such as holiday trips. Risk perception in relation to travel practices has been widely studied in the field of tourism. Categories for different risks have been established by different scholars and many variables for what affect risk perception, such as gender, culture, social status, past experience, have been distinguished (Roehl & Fesenmeier, 1992; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). Most of these studies rely on quantitative surveys instead of qualitative research methods and study risk perception as a separate part of the daily lives, values and ideals of individuals. They do not take into account how the respondents' values and practices related to travel might affect their risk perception. These studies examine travel risk perception as a separate part from everyday life; it only occurs when people travel abroad, where situations are supposedly completely

different from daily life. However, previous anthropological studies of tourism would say that tourism is a part of people's everyday lives (MacCannell 1976, Urry, 1990). Tourism choices reflect the values and beliefs which people hold in their daily life; when people take a trip, they take their everyday past experiences with them. This is because people's consumption choices communicate who they are and what they believe in (Mendez, 2009). Therefore, the kind of trips abroad people take classifies what kind of people they are and what values they have. The ways in which people travel and how they should travel, what places they visit and should visit, what kind of accommodation they would choose, what kind of activities they engage in and so on defines them. If the invisible, taken for granted practices and value of the practices surrounding travel are scrutinized, one can discern what shapes the risk management of individuals. Travel risk perception is thus a multifaceted issue and in order to understand why certain risks are perceived a certain way, I suggest looking at how people value travelling and associate practices to travelling through the lens of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus is a theoretical concept popularized by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990). A person's habitus is a constellation of habits, values and learned practices; it illustrates how our past experiences mold our values and how daily lives are not separate of travelling practices (Bourdieu, 1990). Importantly, these values and practices can be so habituated in our lives that they become invisible, taken for granted norms. Travel risk perception can be better understood by looking at the travel habitus of people, that is, the social practices and values that influence how people travel, what travel habits they have and what values are connected to these practices. It is valuable to investigate travel and risks related to travel from the value and habitual perspective because if values and practices that people associate with travel are not understood, only a partial image of risk perception can be acquired. If people's travel practices have a certain "taken for granted" value for them, it affects how risks are perceived and taken into account. Therefore, by inspecting a person's travel habitus, that is, a person's travel habits, practices, and values related to travel, a better understanding of how risks are a part of travelling can be gained. If people are given the chance to express why certain risks are important to them and what the rationale lays behind different travel choices, an understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of travelling can be better understood. Thus, I suggest that risk perception can be better understood by incorporating study of habitus to previous studies surrounding risk perception.

## 1.1 Research questions

This thesis aims to understand how Finnish mothers' ideas about risk in conjunction with travelling shape the way they manage risks when travelling. I approached this issue by asking questions in two categories: first, what kind of value mothers place on travelling abroad and, second, how risks are a part of travelling. First, I wish to discuss the respondents' general perception of travel (what travel means to them and what values they express in practice) in order to find out what these values mean for their travel practices. Second, I aim to understand how different risks are perceived and taken into consideration in relation to travelling. I want to understand how health risks are perceived in relation to other risks, which ones are more valuable than others and why. I intend to explore the following questions:

1. What role does travel play in the respondents' lives? What is the meaning of travel to them? What are ideal ways to travel and why? What kinds of practices are associated with travel? What values does travelling have for individuals?
2. What risks are associated with travelling? Which risks are taken into account? In which ways are risks managed? Which risks are more pertinent than others and why?

## 1.2 Structure of arguments

In chapter two, I will start by outlining the theoretical framework for my thesis and discuss previous research in order to illustrate how the concept of habitus can complement previous research surrounding risk perception. In chapter three, I will provide background of Finnish travelling by discussing how Finnish travel is seen in statistics. In chapter four, I will introduce the qualitative research method, in depth interviews, that I have used and which themes were explored with the respondents during interviews. I will also discuss the limitations of the research and ethics related to the research. In chapter five, I will discuss my findings and present relevant themes, which emerged from the interviews. First, I will focus on what travel means to the respondents and what kind of role does it have in their lives. Second, I will explore what kind of risks the respondents perceive in relation to travelling abroad and how do they manage these risks. In the final chapter, I will summarize the main findings of the research, discuss the applicability of the findings, and possibilities for future research prospects.



## 2. Literature review and theoretical foundation

This section will introduce and explain background to tourism studies and to travel risk perception studies and explore different aspects which influence risk perception which are relevant to this thesis. My purpose is to show that by incorporating study of risk perception to the study of the travel habitus, a better understanding of different processes that affect risk perception of travellers can be gained.

### 2.1 Risk perception and tourism

In order to understand how the travel habitus can be related to studies of risk perception, previous research of travel risk perception should be discussed. Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992) outline a way to approach risk perception in international pleasure travel by using seven components of different types of risk that have been identified in consumer behavior theory. The risks defined in consumer behavior theory are:

*equipment risk*, the possibility of mechanical or equipment problems with a purchase; *financial risk*, the possibility that the purchase will not provide value for the money spent; *physical risk*, the possibility of a purchase causing physical danger, injury or sickness; *psychological risk*, the possibility that a purchase will not reflect one's personality or self-image; *satisfaction risk*, the possibility that a purchase will not provide personal satisfaction; *social risk*, the possibility that a purchase will affect others' opinion of the consumer; and *time risk*, the possibility that a purchase will take too much time or be a waste of time (Roehl & Fesenmeier, 1992, p.18). (emphasis added)

Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992) apply these risks to studying risks related to tourism. Three groups of respondents emerged from their analysis based on which risks were paying attention to; *Place risk group*, *Functional risk group* and *Risk neutral group* (Roehl & Fesenmeier, 1992). That is to say, that there are different groups of people which consider different risks in relation to travelling more important to them and discard other risks as not as important. The value the individuals place on different risks then affects how the people travel. Interestingly, Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992) found that parents who travel with their children were mostly

concerned with *equipment risk* and *physical risk*. Therefore, the safety of their family during travel was most important to them. Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992) also found that during trips family activities dominate much of adult leisure behavior and obligations placed on parents by young children often act as barriers to participation in various activities. But how does this finding apply to Finnish mothers of today? Is the safety of their children the most considered risk or have other risks entered the picture? What other risks do they consider? How does travelling with one's children influence travel practices?

## 2.2 Past travel experience and risk perception

Previous studies have shown that past experience of a traveller and the subjective perceptions of travellers have an impact on a person's risk perception. Sönmez and Graefe (1998) claim that subjective perceptions of risk and safety related to travelling as well as previous travel experience are likely to influence travel decisions of individuals. Actual travel experience with a destination gives individuals an opportunity to compare their perceptions of the destination and its risks with reality (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). However, if a person does not have personal experience of a certain destination, they can avoid destinations they perceive as risky by choosing others they consider safe (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). Whether a destination or region is really safe or risky does not matter; all that matters is the traveller's subjective perception of the destination (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). Therefore, two biggest influences of risk perception in travelling abroad are then personal past experience of travel and subjective perceptions of unknown destinations according to Sönmez and Graefe.

Other theorist support Sönmez and Graefe's (1998) findings. Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely (2007) found differences between experienced and inexperienced backpackers in terms of their risk perception. Their findings suggest that experienced backpackers were more concerned with physical harm risks, their social image and their social environment's response, while inexperienced backpackers are characterized by risks such as their personal expectations, financial risks and whether they would seem like mass tourists (Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2007). Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely explain this development by referencing Pearce's (1988) "tourism career ladder" theory. Pearce suggests that compared to experienced tourists, their inexperienced counterparts are more likely to be concerned about the satisfaction of lower-order needs such as food and safety (Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2007). Reichel, Fuchs

and Uriely (2007) claim that experienced backpackers learn which risks to be concerned about. The more experienced the backpacker is, the more highlighted different risks become based on their own experience (Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2007).

Previous experience of a certain destination also influences how individuals perceive risks when they travel to a certain destination again. Fuchs and Reichel (2011) claim that first time visitors utilize a large number of risk reduction strategies compared to repeat visitors. Repeat visitors rely on their own experience and spend less money on travelling (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). The repeat visitors' prior knowledge, which is based on familiarity, expertise and previous experience, proved to be helpful to the travellers. Previous experience of travel can increase one's confidence in travel practices and can lead them to use less risk reduction strategies, because they have not experienced these risks to be pressing to them anymore. Huang and Hsu (2009) claim that travellers' motivations can be affected by past travel experience and their attitude on whether they wished to revisit a destination again (Huang & Hsu, 2009). If the travellers had a positive experience of a destination, they were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the destination and visit the destination again (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Neal and Gursoy (2008) claim that the satisfaction of travellers on travel overall should be studied in order to understand travellers' motivations. A traveller's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with travel and tourism services is affected by their previous experiences of using tourism services (Neal & Gursoy, 2008). Therefore, the individuals' experiences with a certain destination and certain services abroad affect their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with travelling.

All of these studies show that previous experience has an effect on the future travel behavior in general, in risk perception and how the individual manages risks. The people are more likely to base their future risk perception on what they have experienced in the past; if they have not experienced a certain risk to be relevant to them, they do not pay attention to this risk anymore. If they have had positive experiences with travel, they are more likely to expect the future travelling experience to be positive. While my goal is not to investigate the individuals overall satisfaction with travel or if they plan to revisit certain destinations, it is important to keep in mind that the previous experiences of travel of individuals can affect individual's current travel practices and risk perception. It is important to ask, have the mothers encountered risks abroad? If so, has it changed their travel practices? What kind of attitude do they have towards risks abroad? Although my focus is not to do an extensive overhaul of their

previous experiences, it is important to keep in mind that their previous experiences have the power to cement certain beliefs surrounding their travel practices.

### **2.3 Tourism, gender and risk perception**

Gender is another issue that needs to be taken into account while discussing tourism and travel decisions of Finnish mothers. Historically, the mobility of women has been controversial, since travelling abroad has been traditionally reserved for privileged, white males (Enevold, 2003). Scharff claims that women's mobility is gendered at least three ways; first, regarding freedom of bodily movement, second, regarding access to places and third, regarding personal safety (in Enevold, 2003). Historically, women's mobility has been restricted by women's freedom to move to places, whether they can access certain places on their own or whether there is a risk of bodily harm occurring to them when women travel on their own (Enevold, 2003). These historical and social-cultural factors might still have an impact on how women perceive risks related to travel or perceive travel in general.

Women's travel risk perception has been studied previously. Reisinger & Crotts (2010) found that female respondents perceived traveling internationally as involving higher risk, were more anxious, felt less safe, and intended to travel less internationally than male respondents regardless of their cultural orientation. These findings could have something to do with the women's ability to travel historically. However, Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter (2010) found that university educated women did not consider safety to be a top priority when they were travelling on their own. Only one-third of their respondents felt that feeling safe and secure was an important or extremely important aspect of their trip abroad (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2010). Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter (2010) speculated that this could be due to the fact that the women in this study had already chosen to visit a safe destination. It is an interesting finding that Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter found that feeling safe and secure was not the primary concern for women. This could be due to a number of reasons, as earlier studies discussed here suggest, it could be due to their earlier travel experiences that safety is not of one of their prime concerns when travelling. It could be that the women trust their ability to choose a suitable destination for their needs: a destination which feels safe without needing any extra attention to safety. Or could it be that the experienced, knowledgeable traveller does not need to think about issues of safety first? It is interesting to study mothers

that travel with their children, as it is interesting to see if they experience anxiety or how they manage their physical safety when travelling abroad.

While my focus is not to do a comparative study of the gender differences, it is important to pay attention to the context from which my respondents are speaking from. First of all, they are privileged to begin with, as they have a chance to travel internationally for the purpose of leisure. Secondly, women's position in the Finnish society can have an effect on their perceptions of travel and risk. Thirdly, their educational background may give them different attitudes towards travelling and the safety of travelling as well, but that might also have something to do with their prior travel experience as discussed earlier. While these are all aspects to keep in mind, my goal is not to probe into different gender relation in Finland or in gender travel in general; what I want to focus on is if these women share similar point of views and reasoning to travel, especially when they travel with their children. That is, if they have a similar travel habitus. Still, it is important to keep in mind the cultural context of these women can have an underlining effect on the individuals' perception of risk related to travelling. I want to look into how Finnish women travel with their children, if they have a shared sense of travelling. Does this group of Finnish mothers have a certain kind of travel habitus? If so, what kinds of values are embedded in it?

## **2.4 Cultural differences and risk perception**

The individual's culture on a national level can influence how people travel and how risks are perceived in relation to travel. Reisinger and Mavondo (2006) found significant differences in perceptions of travel risk and safety, anxiety and travel intentions among tourists from different countries. In their study, tourists from the United States, Hong Kong and Australia perceived more travel risks, felt less safe, were more anxious and reluctant to travel than tourists from the United Kingdom, Canada and Greece (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006).

According to Rob Law's (2006) study, tourists from different cultures preferred to travel to destinations that were safe or had fewer risks. However, the perception of which destination was safer or had less risk of something happening varied from culture to culture. Interestingly, Asian travellers perceived all types of risks to be significantly higher than Western travellers (Law, 2006). This could be due to the respondents' culture of the country of origin. Law (2006) speculated that, for example, the Western media could over-report risks, which could

lead to people ignoring certain risks. Therefore, it is important to consider how the culture in the country of origin could affect how people perceive and prepare for risk while travelling abroad. Are there certain aspects in Finnish culture, which influence the ways in which Finnish mothers perceive risks when travelling abroad? It is important to keep in mind that the findings in this thesis might not apply to different cultures, as my informants are all Finnish.

Aro, Vartti, Schreck, Turtiainen and Uutela (2009) have studied how Finnish male and female tourists aged 20-70-years-old perceive risk in relation to travelling abroad and their willingness to take health risks during holiday trips to Asia. Most of their respondents felt that their risk of contracting a disease abroad was very low (Aro et al. 2009). The respondents were willing to take health risks because of the following reasons: “holiday is holiday, if something happens, I can’t help it”; and “risk should not ruin your holiday” (Aro et al., 2009, p. 69). Finns consider holidays abroad to have an inherently *hedonistic* function: “people want to relax and they are ready to loosen control while being in unfamiliar circumstances and free from everyday life” (Aro et al., 2009, p. 70). Hyrynen (2010) states that risk profiles of Finnish people are not well known. He claims that Finns tend to overemphasize the importance of vaccinations and malaria medication while disregarding other travel health related advice. According to Hyrynen, travel health consultation services are vital in order for individuals to increase their knowledge of travel risks, but other channels should be opened to influence attitudes surrounding travel related risks. Therefore, it is valuable to study further what kind of attitudes Finns have in relation to travel risks and how do the current perceptions of travel risks influence how Finnish prepare for risks when travelling abroad.

The way travel health care is organized might also have an influence on the risk perception of individuals. To manage different risks of travelling abroad, individuals can either make their own assessment of risks or seek help from health care professionals on how to prepare for trips abroad. According to Leder, Chen and Wilson (2012) travel health recommendations from health care professional’s for individuals are based on individual risk assessments of multiple factors; most importantly the chosen destination and duration of the impending trip. Many people undertake frequent trips during their life, but existing WHO, CDC and national advisory board recommendations do not explicitly consider how the time spent abroad by travellers can accumulate over time (Leder, Chen & Wilson 2012). As Hyrynen (2010) argued, the emphasis of travel consultations is on vaccination and other travel medication and

based on single trip itineraries. Leder, Chen and Wilson (2012) argue it would be useful to take into account how many trips individuals could possibly make in the future and during their lifetime. This could be a way to give more beneficial travel health planning information for individuals that would serve their long term travel plans. Travel health recommendations are based on how people individually assess their own risk behavior; therefore, how the individual perceives risks is a very important part of how individual travellers manage risks when travelling abroad (Leder, Chen and Wilson, 2012). According to Nielsen, Pedersen and Larsen (2009) most risk situations happen on short-term trips and majority of risk situations are involuntary and thus would not necessarily be discussed during the consultation with a health care professional before travel. When trips are seen as short trips, instead of the life time accumulation of several trips, the chance engaging in risk behavior seems smaller, which affects risk perception of individuals (Nielsen, Pedersen & Larsen, 2009). Therefore, the health care system and the ways in which health care professionals advise individuals can affect risk perception of individuals. It is then valuable to look into how the Finnish health care system impacts the risk perception of Finns. Are there certain taken for granted qualities of how one should prepare for health risks on trips abroad? While this thesis does not focus on studying health care systems, it is important to take into consideration that health care procedures can have an impact on the risk perception of individuals.

According to the previous studies of risk perception discussed above, risk perception of individuals is affected by many qualities; a person's past experience, a person's social status, a person's gender, a person's culture and nationality. In the next section I will discuss how cultural theories surrounding travel, especially the habitus, can be applied to risk perception studies in order to complement previous research surrounding risk perception.

## **2.5 Tourism studies and Bourdieu's habitus**

According to cultural tourism studies, travelling abroad is a leisurely activity as opposed to a working activity (Edensor, 2001; Urry, 1990). Travelling is also seen as offering possibilities for individuals to let loose and feel free of everyday obligations (MacCannell, 1976). Urry (1990) defines the qualities of a tourist as follows: he/she travels to various destinations, the journey must be outside of a normal place of residence and the tourist engages in tourist practices such as gazing at sights in different destination. The tourism industry provides sights

for tourist to gaze at. For Urry (1990), the most important aspect of leisurely trips for tourists is to see something different. On the other hand, MacCannell (1976) claims that the basic component to the tourists' motivation to travel is the desire to experience the authenticity of other cultures. Tourists seek to experience local culture by seeing everything the way it "ought to be seen" (MacCannell, 1976, p.10). The tourists desire to gain a more profound understanding of local culture instead of superficial tourist experiences (MacCannell, 1976). In addition, Pearce and Lee (2005) claim the most important motivation factors for individuals to travel are to provide an escape from the daily routine, novelty of experiencing something new, personal relationships with people, and self-development. Kontogeorgopoulos (2003) also argues that individuals seek to experience authentic culture on trips abroad. There are different ways of experiencing "authentic" cultural interactions, as authenticity bears different meanings for different people (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003). Travelling abroad is thus a leisurely break from routine, a time to experience novelty, experience local culture and self-development.

Travelling abroad is connected to everyday life. Both MacCannell and Urry point out that people are tourists whether they like it or not; the borders of where tourist become tourist have also become blurred and tourism cannot be a separate entity excluded from daily life (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990; Nash & Smith, 1991). In addition, both travel motivations and what people aspire to achieve through travelling draw heavily on people's everyday life contexts and especially on the phase of life that the individual (and his/her family) is in at present (Blichfeldt, 2007). The contexts of everyday lives profoundly impact the experiences that people aspire for during their vacations (Blichfeldt, 2007). Travelling abroad thus affects the daily lives of people; daily life aspirations are acted out through travelling and travel experience influences daily lives of people.

Cultural theorists have different theoretical point of views regarding travel practices. One approach to looking at travel is to look at it as a ritual with transformative effects on the individual. Lewis, Kerr and Pomeroy (2010) claim that travel at certain stages of life can be seen to have transformative effects on the individual. They found that self-identity and social norms of people affect how they choose their trips abroad. A certain trip can work as a rite of passage to adulthood for example. While I agree that travel in general or a single trip can have transformative effects on the individual, this thesis' focus is on the habits that individuals have and the preconceived notions that people have about travelling and risks related to



travelling, instead of focusing on the transformative effect of travel itself or of a single trip. My goal is not to ask how travel has changed their life, but rather, how is travel part of their life and what values do they associate with travel. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis I chose to look at travel practices from a performative theoretical perspective to support the concept of the travel habitus.

In order to understand how travel practices can be seen as constellation of practices and values, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus needs to be understood. He describes the habitus as:

a system of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without any way of being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at end or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53).

That is, the habitus is a constellation of values and practices, which are accumulated over time. Because the habitus is homogenous within a certain group of people, it causes practices and habits to be immediately understandable and thus taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1990). The practices embedded in the habitus become invisible norms; they are the everyday rules and practices that individuals perform in society every day within a certain social group.

Different groups in society have different values and practices in their habitus (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been related to tourism before. Rafiq Ahmad (2012) claims that the tourists' consumption choices are done in conformity to their tourist class habitus. Different individuals make distinctions with other individuals based on their class habitus; they travel to certain type of destinations, which build cultural capital in the eyes of others (Ahmad, 2012). This distinction has a crucial significance in Bourdieu's theory of the habitus; cultural capital expresses the individuals' taste and values. Ahmad (2012) found that tourism choices which focused on experiencing local cultures and low budget trips were considered the most valuable in the eyes of people's peers, while mass tourist decisions, such

as making ready-made trips in all-inclusive destinations, were seen as the least valuable practices. Therefore, the more a person would travel by experiencing local cultures with the knowledge of how to tightly budget one's trip, the more the person would have cultural capital as a traveller. The choices one makes in choosing destinations, accommodation or activities are all reflections of the travel habitus.

Edensor links the habitus not solely to consumption choices of tourist, but to performances and practices that a tourist takes part in while travelling abroad. Edensor's (2001) claims that there is a shared consciousness of how different tourist should act in different situations, the tourism habitus. Edensor (2001) sees that travelling as a performance; every action a traveller does or choice a traveller chooses is done in according to the norms of how one should act as a tourist, that is, the tourism habitus. Tourists then can perform according to these norms and assumption or they can improvise by doing a different performance. Interestingly, Edensor (2001) claims that people can show their identity by these travel performances or can defy norms embedded in the tourism habitus. For example, an individual might want to avoid going to a certain kind of destination, because he or she sees it as a mass tourist destination. This is their way of defying mass tourist norms and performing their identity by choosing a destination that fits their sense of self. What is important to keep in mind is that these performances can be interpreted differently based on who is watching; an individual can have the intention of doing an identity building performance, but others can interpret it differently based on the context in which the performance happens. Edensor (2001) claims that travel performances can renew existing conventions, but can also challenge them. Therefore, the norms surrounding travel habitus can change over time. Edensor (2001) argues that by looking at travel practices and how improvisation occurs, the different values and practices related to the tourism habitus can be scrutinized.

Therefore, by focusing on the practices that people relate to travel, the values and practices of the travel habitus can be revealed. It is valuable to examine how these practices in turn affect risk perception and risk management. Are there practices and values, which influence risk perceptions and preparations for risks? What preparations do mothers go through before travelling abroad? Have the respondents changed their previous notions of risks based on their experiences? Which types of tourism performances are preferred? How does the habitus of the Finnish mothers influence their travel decisions and simultaneously risk perception?

As previous studies of risk perception have shown, previous experience of travellers has an important effect on how people plan to travel in the future, their attitudes towards travel, how they value travelling practices and what risks they take into consideration. The travel habitus is a suitable tool to add to the study of risk perception, as it encompasses within it the different multifaceted experiences which affect risk perception; a person's culture surrounding travel health, a person's gender, a person's prior experiences, a person's cultural understanding surrounding travel risk are all part of the travel habitus. To understand these subjective perceptions and how the previous experiences have come to pass, it is vital to look at travelling as a multifaceted phenomenon. By looking at the experiences, aspirations and values people associate with travel, an understanding of why certain risks have value and others do not can be uncovered. Thus, by looking at travel as a collection of practices and values, as a travel habitus, the different aspects of risk perception and management can be understood.

Before discussing the methods and empirical findings of this thesis, I will provide background to how much the Finns travel abroad by looking at how Finnish travel is seen in statistics. This is done in order to provide background on why studying risk perception of Finns is a current issue and why the sample group of respondents, Finnish mothers, is an important group of Finns to study.

### 3. Background in statistics

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background of how Finnish travel is seen in statistics. According to the statistics of the Official Statistics of Finland (2010), the amount of trips abroad made by Finns has increased steadily year by year. During the past 15 years, the amount of trips made by Finns on their free time has more than doubled. In 1997 Finns took 1.9 million trips abroad and in 2011 Finns took 4.3 million trips abroad, which include spending at least one night at the destination (Official Statistics of Finland, 2010, 2011a). Furthermore, the percentage of the population travelling per year has increased. In 1997 35% of the population travelled abroad on their spare time, while in 2011 the percentage of population travelling had risen to 47% (Official Statistics of Finland, 2010, 2011d). The number of trips taken per year has also grown. In 1997 1.346.000 of Finns travelled 1.9 million trips, which makes 1.4 trips taken per person who travelled in 1997(Official Statistics of Finland, 2010). In 2011 1.904.000 of Finns travelled 4.3 million trips abroad, which makes 2.25 trips taken per person who travelled in 2011(Official Statistics of Finland, 2011a). According to the statistics, travelling abroad has increased in numbers and also the frequency of trips made abroad had increased.

Official Statistics of Finland also have information on which Finns travel the most. According to the statistics, the Finns who are most likely to travel the most are women, live in the Helsinki Metropolitan district, live with someone, are between the ages of 35 to 44 and have a higher education degree (Official Statistics of Finland, 2011b). Interestingly, the statistics show that people who have children travel as much as people who live together with someone. Therefore, it is likely that many mothers from the Helsinki Metropolitan district are likely to travel frequently.

The statistics show that Finns travel mostly to European countries. The most popular destination is Estonia, while the second and third most visited destinations are Sweden and Spain (including the Canary Islands) (Official Statistics of Finland, 2012). During the past seven years, most of the ten most visited countries by Finns are European countries (Official Statistics of Finland, 2012); however, the numbers of trips made to different destinations change every year. Therefore, Finns make trips to a variety of different destinations and

popularity of different destinations change every year. These statistics show trips made abroad by Finns is increasing and diversifying.

To get a sense of how much Finns who travel every year could possibly spend abroad during their lifetime, a number of possible years spent abroad could be calculated. Nielsen, Pedersen and Larsen (2009) calculated how much time Danish people who travelled to countries where there would be a high risk of contracting hepatitis B would end up spending abroad during their lifetime. By using the same formula used in the Nielsen, Pedersen and Larsen study, the amount of how much time Finns who travel every year could possibly spend abroad can be calculated: “time spent abroad per year” x “how many years a person travels approximately during a person’s lifetime” equals number of years spent abroad. This estimate is based on the statistics found at the Official Statistics of Finland (Official Statistics of Finland, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d). According to the estimate, the Finns who travel abroad every year, if they travelled the same amount that they travelled in 2011, they would end up spending approximately 2.3 years of their life abroad. This estimate presumes that Finns would travel the same amount every year. This would mean that the average Finn, who travels abroad every year, would spend around 14, 2 days abroad each year. It is important to keep in mind that the estimate does take into account work trips made abroad or time spent living abroad or day trips made abroad. If these aspects were taken into consideration, the estimated time spent abroad could be significantly larger. In addition, the estimate does not take into account future changes in travelling or how much Finns have travelled in the past. It is an estimate of the future of travelling of Finns; if Finns born in this era, who travel every year, would continue travelling as they did in 2011, they would spend the estimated time abroad during their travelling during the ages of 15-74-years-old. What is valuable about the estimate is that it shows the cumulative nature of trips made abroad. One or two weeks a year spent abroad might not seem like a large amount of time to put oneself at risk, but a few years of possible exposure to risks paints a different image of the nature of travelling. The numeric quality of the estimate make it easier for communicative purposes to understand that people’s time spent abroad eventually adds up.

## 4. Methods

In this study, I have interviewed six mothers on how they travel abroad and prepare for travelling abroad on their spare time with their families and children. The respondents are all from the Helsinki Metropolitan area, are between the ages of 25 to 47-years-old and have children between the ages of 3 to 17-years-old. I was mostly interested in interviewing respondents who had children under the age of 15. The reason why I chose this group of respondents is because according to the quantitative data presented earlier, the Finns who were most likely to travel the most were women, lived with someone and were living in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. I did not select the respondents based on their level of education level or exact age. Whether the mothers were single or married was not relevant, since I am interested in the relationship between the mother and child in relation to travelling practices.

To gain insight in to the respondents' travel practices, how they prepare for travel, what travel means to them and how risks are a part of this process, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with the respondents. The reason why the interviews were semi-structured is because I wanted the respondents to be able to answer my questions openly about on how they themselves perceive travelling, what travelling means to them and what kind of risks they consider when travelling. As a researcher, I wanted there to be a possibility to expand on certain themes, based on what the respondent's response to the topics presented were. As Davis claims, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to introduce new topics or to add supplementary questions and encourage the respondent to expand on a response (2002, p. 95). This is valuable for this study, as risk perception can vary based on a person's background.

### 4.1 Limitations of research

The methods of using semi-structured interviews does present challenges to the researcher. Time is an important factor. There has to be enough time to recruit respondents, conduct interviews and analyze the material. The time allotted for this research to gather research material limited the sampling of respondents. If there had been more time, more interviews could have been conducted to gain a broader sampling of respondents. With a larger sampling of respondents and more time spent with the informants, more in depth variation which on issues affect risk perception could be found. Furthermore, it is possible that some aspects of

travel behavior were not uncovered in these interviews because of their routinized nature. Some of their travel preparations might be taken for granted, that is, that they do not need mentioning. It could be beneficial to observe travel preparations to see how the preparation process happens in practice and if there is a discrepancy between what respondents say they do and what they do in practice. In the future, a more extensive study with a larger group of informants and multiple research methods could be implemented.

The recruitment of respondents proved to be time consuming and difficult at times, as mothers willing to talk about their travelling habits to an unknown person might be difficult to find; especially since the research involves travelling with one's children, issues of trust came about. The most productive way to handle recruitment was through social network of connections. The respondents were more likely to agree to an interview, if someone had referred me to them. The respondents that I interviewed were part of my social acquaintances' larger social network. However, it was made sure that I knew none of the respondents personally or had any personal connection to them before the interview to increase objectivity of research material.

## **4.2 Ethics**

Ethics are an important part of ethnographic studies and should always be contemplated upon when embarking on a research project. Ethics are important to consider when conducting research with co-operation of academics and private companies. Before interviews were conducted, the respondents were informed of the premise of the research and their co-operation between the researcher and GlaxoSmithKline. For the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of the respondents, the names of the respondents were changed and the names of their children are not mentioned. I choose not to reveal the exact cities of residence, occupation or education level of the respondents in order to increase the anonymity of the respondents.

## **4.3 Research themes**

By conducting the interviews, I wanted to gain knowledge of two issues. First, how is travelling a part of the respondent's lives and what it means to them? Second, how are risks

considered and managed in relation to travelling abroad? To gain insight into these questions I selected a set of the themes, which were discussed with the respondents during the interviews.

The themes included the following:

1. *Travel as a part of the respondent's life.* How much do the respondents and their families travel? Where do they travel and why? What do they want to achieve by travelling? Why is travelling important to them? How do they prepare for travelling?
2. *Risks and preparation for risks related to travel.* How do the respondents prepare for travelling in terms of different risks? Which risks are taken into consideration when preparing to travel beforehand? Have the respondents experienced situations, which felt risky for them during the trip abroad? Do the respondents avoid certain destinations or activities on trips abroad? Why?



## 5. Research findings and discussion

### 5.1 Patterns of division between respondents

The most defining characteristics which set the mothers apart in terms of their travelling were their income the family had to spend and the age and amount of children that the respondents had in their family. Here is a breakdown of the informants, their age, if they had a single or double income and the age of their children:

Name	Income	Age	Number of children	Age of children
Minna	Single income	35	1	12
Silja	Double income	37	3	7-13
Iris	Single income	37	1	5
Erika	Single income	25	1	5
Kaisa	Single income	47	3	3-17
Salla	Double income	31	1	3

All of the respondents had travelled abroad with their children and expressed an interest to keep on travelling abroad with their children. They did not see the age of their children as an obstacle to travelling abroad in general. On average all of the respondents travelled abroad two to three times per year. These trips included spending at least one night at the destination. The trips varied in length from 14 days to three days. There was much variation in this category. The length of the trips was mostly dependent on how much money and time was available to the respondents at the time.

The difference between the respondents was how their income and civil status affected their travelling habits. In terms of civil status, the respondents fell into two groups: married and single. The married respondents tended to have variety in their trips abroad; they took trips abroad with friends (with or without their children), trips abroad with only their spouses and trips abroad with only their children. Three of my respondents fell into this group: Iris, Salla and Silja.

*Iris* is married, a stay-at-home mother and has one child; she has a habit of travelling abroad around twice a year with her child or with her husband and her child. *Salla* is married and has one child; she travels abroad around twice a year with her child or with her husband. *Silja* is a married mother of three who takes different kinds of trips frequently, sometimes even once a month; she does trips with her husband, she does trips with her whole family and trips with her family and other friends and their families. Interestingly, single mothers tended to have more set ways of how they were travelling; *Minna* mostly travelled together with her child, *Kaisa* travelled together with her children and *Erika* travelled together with her child and her family members. Therefore, based on these respondents', the civil status of mothers' affects the ways in which they travel. Married mothers seem to have more opportunities for different types of trips with different company due to their social networks, while single mothers tend to stick to travelling with their child and close family.

The income of single parents impacted their travelling behavior; *Kaisa* could not afford to travel abroad regularly every year with her children when they were younger and *Erika* has a habit of taking day trips abroad with her child, because they are less expensive than trips abroad which would include spending the night at the destination. Both *Kaisa* and *Erika* expressed interest in travelling abroad more often if they had more funds to spend. The income of the respondents' has an effect on how much the respondents were able to travel abroad with their children.

In the next section, I will discuss the themes, which emerged from the semi-structured in-depth interviews. I sought to find similarities between the attitudes and travelling practices of my respondents, which would represent their travel habitus, despite the differences between respondents in financial status and social status. The emerging themes are discussed under two main questions: what role does travel play in the respondents' lives and what risks are associated with travelling?

## **5.2 What role does travel play in the respondents' lives?**

Here I will outline the similar pattern of how travel was seen as a part of the respondents' lives. Firstly, I will outline what role travel is supposed to have in their life. An important

criterion of travelling is that trips abroad are meant to be a break from the everyday routine.

As Minna explains:

“Travelling is definitely a break from everyday life... You can relax better abroad than you could if you were vacationing in a cottage in Finland, in my opinion. You get to get away from the whole country and get to be in a completely different environment.”

(personal communication, September 24th 2012)

The respondents feel the need to break up their everyday routine with something in order to provide balance of work and play in their life. Similar to MacCannell's (1976) and Urry's (1990) claims, trips abroad are seen as opportunities to feel free of daily obligations and get a break from daily life. By travelling abroad, the respondents can experience a stronger break from their everyday routine than relaxing in their home country. It is important to them to see and experience a completely different environment from their home country in order to leave stress of the everyday behind. As Urry (1990) and MacCannell (1976) claim, travel needs to be something enjoyable. Travel has to be “hedonistic” to some degree, in order for the trip to be enjoyable and provide the relaxing feeling of breaking free from the everyday routine (Aro et.al, 2009).

However, while one of the important qualities of travelling is relaxing and taking a break from the everyday, travel has much deeper meaning to the respondents. Travelling was described as an important activity in terms of developing oneself. The respondents felt that by travelling they would learn new things about others and themselves and could develop their personalities. As Minna says:

”If you live in Finland your whole life, you will not see how people live completely differently and how people are different around the world. It is an amazing privilege to get to see all of that. It makes you more open-minded.”

(personal communication, September 24th 2012)

Seeing differences around the world is seen to have a transformative effect on the individual. The experiences gained through travelling are seen to make a person more open-minded and more appreciative of other cultures. This high regard and curiosity for other cultures is seen as

valuable and a great quality to have as a person. Therefore, even though travelling abroad is a leisurely activity, which is supposed to attach one from the everyday, it does have an effect on how people perceive their everyday life.

Travel is thus seen as a valuable part of the lives of the respondents. All of the respondents felt that it is very important to keep travelling after having children. In fact, all respondents expressed that they could not imagine life without travelling. As Minna says: “I could not live like that that I would not travel anywhere” (personal communication, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2012). This need to travel throughout a person’s life was considered as an unquestioned norm. Several of my respondents described travelling as something personal or as a “lifeline.” That is, as something that makes life worthwhile. Travelling is thus not completely separate from everyday life; it is a part of the respondents’ lifestyle. Travelling is thus seen as a very valuable practice in general in the respondents’ shared travel habitus.

What makes this lifestyle choice more apparent is that the respondents make a distinction between themselves (as people who love to travel) and people who are not as interested in travelling or cannot afford to travel:

“I could not live like that that I would not travel anywhere. There must be a lot of people like that (who do not travel). That they just do not have that kind of adventurous quality...”

(Minna, personal communication, September 24th 2012)

As Bourdieu (1990) claims, distinction is essential in defining differences between classes and to distinguish what is valuable and what is less valuable. People who travel are seen as cultured, open-minded and adventurous. On the other hand, people who do not have the means to travel, or more importantly lack the motivation to travel, are seen as somehow lacking the qualities of the people who experience travel as a personal matter. Travelling is seen as a fundamentally important and personal practice in life, which will help a person become who they want to be. It is socially valuable for the respondents to love to travel and to have a personal attachment towards travelling. Having a personal passion for travelling and exercising that passion thus makes a person seem valuable in the eyes of others who share the same travel habitus.

In addition, it is not only the amount of trips that a person makes, which makes travel practices valuable. Different kinds of trips and ways of travelling have different value. Self-made trips are seen as more valuable and personal, while ready-made trips are seen as impersonal and designed for the masses:

“I could always travel more and see new places. I have a traveller’s soul. It’s always fun to go to a new destination. I have always been like that that further I travel, the better. The more exotic the destination, the better. We don’t travel to family holiday destinations where there’s all these assigned activities and where parents only sit by the pool. We do more of our own trips to different kinds of destinations.”

(Iris, personal communication, October 17th 2012)

Based on these comments, a trip becomes more valuable if it is designed by oneself and is done to a different exotic place, so that one can experience and discover something new. Variety in travel is thus important. If one makes the same kind of trips to similar destinations repeatedly, it implies that the person travelling is not interested in discovering new things. The amount of travel is not the most important aspect, but it is also the quality of the travel itself. Therefore, it is ideal, first, that something new should be learned and seen on each trip and, second, self-made trips are more valuable, since through self-made trips the traveller is able to fulfill his or her own personal interest according to the travel habitus of the respondents.

How travel affects the respondents’ daily lives is also seen in the ways in which they talk about their social circles. Many respondents mentioned during the interviews that they had relations with people from different countries. Many of the respondents have or have had relationships with people from foreign countries, had studied abroad or worked abroad. Many of them also had family members or friends living abroad; the respondents had social networks in many countries. These social networks can be beneficial to the respondents while travelling:

”Many times there might be a friend or relative in the destination that we want to visit and then we kind of take advantage of it...’Hey, we have an aunt who lives in New York, let’s spend the night there’...It creates more opportunities

for travelling when we don't need to spend money on a hotel and we can spend the night at someone's place.”

(Iris, personal communication, October 17th 2012).

Many respondents have travelled to see friends or family members abroad. The advantage of these trips is that they get to spend time with a person they know, they gain an insider's perspective of the destination they are visiting and they can also save money by not having to spend money on hotels. The respondents can thus use their social networks abroad to further their travel opportunities. These social connections then increase one's travel capabilities and are also embedded in their everyday social interactions. Their international social network is an active part of their everyday lives, which influences their travel behavior. This is also another example, which illustrates the how connected everyday life and travelling practices are.

Travelling has been a part of the respondents' lives ever since they were children. Many respondents expressed that they have grown to be accustomed to travelling and have learned travel performances from their parents. Many informants have travelled since they were children themselves. Travelling has become a part of their life on an early stage:

“Travelling is important. It has been a part of my life ever since I was little. Maybe I have grown to consider it important. I haven't experienced that Finland is the only, best country in the world. I have experienced that there are so many other countries, which I want to see. I want to see the world, different kind of cultures, languages, different kind of foods, manners, places, destinations and learn something new. ”

(Iris, personal communication, October 17th 2012)

Iris has learned to perform the role of the traveller from her parents. Travelling has become an invisible norm, a staple in her life. Iris also feels the need to continue teaching this lifestyle to her child:

“Travel has been a part of my normal life for so long that, if possible, I want to give my child the same experiences that I have had when I was little. To be able

to see different countries and cultures and to learn about life outside of your own living environment.”

(personal communication, October 17th 2012)

It is important for her child to learn and develop as a person and as a traveller. In fact, it is fundamental to the respondents that they were able to pass on their love of travelling for their children. Travelling abroad was seen as having good influence on the rearing of the children. The respondents stated that it was important for their children to see how people in other cultures acted and for them to see different surroundings. The values that travelling abroad included the following: open mindedness towards other cultures, not being afraid of other cultures and the world and experiencing different ways of thinking about things that we take for granted in our home country. The travel habitus of the respondents demonstrates that through travelling one innately has to become open-minded. This is what has been taught to them, which they have experienced themselves and which they have realized to be true to them. Through this collective experience of the respondents, they have learned which values come with travelling and are embedded in the travelling habitus.

Since travelling is seen to have a positive effect on a person, it is seen as limiting if one is not able to travel as a child. Not being able to experience travelling was seen as a loss for the child's upbringing:

“I think it would be a shame if my children would not have been able to travel and see the world. I would feel that they would have kind of been in the dark... I think it is important for them to see that Finland is not the only place in the world and that there are different ways to do things and think about things.“

(Kaisa, personal communication, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Many respondents thought that if their children would not be able to see the world, they would be “left in the dark” about matters around the world. Travelling is thus seen as having an “enlightening” effect on the individual. If one has travelled and seen the world, one has become a cultured, open minded people and understanding towards other people. Travelling abroad is thus seen affecting how people view the world and what kind of people they become. Travelling can be seen to have a profound effect on the everyday lives of the respondents. The knowledge and experience that the respondents have gained on their trips

abroad is thought to affect their attitudes about life in general. The values and practices of the travel habitus thus affect the daily lives of people.

It is also important part of the travel habitus, that travel is a constant part of a person's life. For many respondents it is a value in itself to look forward to the next trip. Once respondents had returned from one trip, they started planning the next trip. As Kaisa explains: "When we have come home from a trip, we immediately have decided where we want to travel next" (personal communication, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2012). The act of waiting for a trip is also an important part of travelling. The fact that the respondents always have a next trip in mind is an important part of their daily life. They always have the next trip to look forward to. Some respondents even use these trips as motivation for their children:

"We try to make a trip during summer and a trip during winter and then a bunch of small trips, so that children have something to look forward to because we don't let them eat junk food or play videogames all the time... So that they would have something to look forward to, that if they can do this, then they can get that."

(Silja, personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Travelling is seen as a reward, something to look forward to that brings balance into everyday life. It is taken for granted that travelling is a positive and rewarding leisure activity. The respondents expressed desire to travel more in the future. Travelling seemed like an activity that the respondents could not get enough of. All of the respondents, except for one, expressed a desire to travel more in the future than they were travelling at the moment. However, for many respondents travelling more often than they were travelling at the moment was difficult to arrange due to two key issues: finances and scheduling of time. All of the respondents had to arrange their travelling around their working schedule and their children's school schedule. It remains to be seen if the individual would really like to travel as much as they think they would. Travelling for leisure very often is unattainable for many of the respondents, which is probably why it seems more tempting. As one of the respondents who travelled very often noted that she would not like to increase the amount of trips made abroad, because she was travelling abroad almost every month. In any case, the norm that arose from the interviews is that you should want to travel often and as frequently as possible.



The personalized qualities of travelling became evident when discussing different destinations, which respondents had travelled to or would like to travel to. Each of the respondents had a special destination or area in the world in mind, which they wanted to visit in the future or an area which they were fascinated with. The question was not if someone would have a dream destination, but which one it was. It was clear that everyone should have a personal interest towards a certain country or a culture. When asked what made these destinations special to them, the answers were based on their subjective perceptions of the country and the culture of the country:

”I would like to go to New Zealand one day... I think that the image that I have of it, of how it looks, of its nature, is what makes it the place I would like to go to. I imagine that it is a bit different than tropical beach destinations... I have wanted to go there for a very long time.”

(Silja, personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Silja saw something in the image of New Zealand that she thought was special to her personally, which she could identify with. For her, it is a different destination from the “tropical” mass tourism destinations. The image of New Zealand is something that relates to herself as an individual. The dream destinations are carefully chosen destinations, which are supposed to reflect the personality of the respondent. The dream destination is thus a personal matter, which every person who considers travelling dear to them should have. Therefore, having a personal interest to a distinct destination is another norm of the travel habitus.

Travel is thus seen as a very important activity to the respondents. Travel is a hedonistic break from the daily routine, yet travelling experiences have a profound effect on how the individual sees the world and what kind of person she becomes. It is seen as a personal practice through which one can express one’s values and develop oneself as a person. As said before, travelling practices can be seen as performances; the ways a person performs travelling shows which values and ideals they hold and want to express.

### 5.2.1 How does travel differ when having children?

In this section I will discuss how traveling with children affects the respondents' travelling practices. Many respondents stated that the amount of trips they take has not decreased just because they had children, but the forms of how they travel have changed:

“We might do different kind of trips with kids than we did when we did not have kids, but the amount of travel has not decreased.”

(Silja, personal communication, September 26th 2012)

The respondents stated that the biggest difference in their travel behavior after they had children is the forms in which they travel or what kind of activities they do while travelling. This is because the respondents have realized that children have different needs and wants from trips abroad than their parents do. The parents then have to take all of the needs and wants of the co-travellers into account. The respondents need to make compromises with their children during the trip, which at sometimes limits the activities, which parents could take part or which destinations the parents wanted to visit.

There are different strategies on how to take different needs to account. Some respondents choose the destinations of their trips based on the needs and wants of their children in order to make the trip more enjoyable for the children, while others decide the trip based on the parents needs and then come up with ways on how to make the trip more enjoyable for the children during the trips. For example, if parents would choose the destination, they would make sure that the trip would include activities that the children prefer. As Minna explains:

”When my daughter was younger, I always decided what we would do on the trip. Now that she has grown up, we always decide together what we are going to do. We do things that I like to do and things that she likes to do...It can never be like that one person could not do anything that they would like to do on a trip.” (personal communication, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2012)

It is the duty of the parent to make sure that travel plans are not monopolized by one person. This becomes important because of the nature of travelling, as discussed earlier. Because trips

abroad are supposed to give every traveller something personal, it would be wrong to take the children's preferred experiences away from them, just because the parents have different interest. Therefore, it becomes an important task for the parents to fit the parents' and children's interest together while travelling abroad.

Another strategy was to design the trip based on the needs of the children and then afterwards think of how the parents' individual needs could be facilitated into the trip:

"If I got to decide, I would never go to a beach resort destination. But it is an easy and safe destination if you are travelling with kids. It's important that the kids get to swim and they are having a good time. Then everyone else is happy too."

(Silja, personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Silja states that it is easier for her family to travel to a destination, which her children prefer. It is most important to her that her children are happy first and then she can be happier as well. However, for Silja it was also important that she gained something personal from the trip; for her it was the local food and historic sites in the destination (personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012). As parents, the respondents feel a responsibility to make the trip enjoyable for children, but they also want to enjoy their own personal pleasures during the trip. Therefore, it is an unquestioned norm that everyone is supposed to be able to get something personal from the trip; both children and adults alike.

Another rising theme was that the age of their children could sometimes affect which destinations the respondents would travel to. Some respondents were "saving" certain trips until their children were old enough to get the most out of the trip. These trips were usually made to destinations outside of Europe and are more expensive to make than trips to Europe. Some parents have certain expectations on what kind of trips should be made with the children when they were in different ages. Silja stated that she was waiting for her children to be older before making a trip to Texas in the United States (personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012). Her reasoning was that she wanted her children to be older, so that they could be able to make the most of the trip. She wanted her daughters to be tall enough to ride the rollercoasters at amusement parks. It would feel like a waste for her to make an expensive trip to the United States earlier if some of her children would miss out on the rollercoaster

rides. Here it becomes clear that the more money one invests in the trip, the bigger the payoff of the trip is expected to be. Even though trips abroad are supposed to express issues of self-expression and self-gratification, finances also play a big part in travelling. The further the destination, the more money needs to be spent and the higher the expectation for personal satisfaction from the trip will be.

Money and time were the common obstacles for why the respondents were not able to travel more or as often as they would like to. All of the respondents' family members need to coordinate their schedules with each other in order to go on a trip together; working mothers have only a certain amount of time allotted for vacation and children have only certain times of the year available to trips due to their school schedule. As mentioned previously, the respondents, who were single mothers with a lower income than they would like to have, had to limit their travel plans at times due to their financial situations. Trips to far away destinations outside Europe were also more difficult to arrange because of the added expenses that a child or several children could add to the trip. Trips to Europe offer a less expensive choice for families with several children. Therefore, parents need to learn different tactics and adopt different attitudes towards travelling after having children; the needs of the children need to be accommodated to travelling arrangements in order for travelling to be a successful experience.

### **5.2.2 What values and ideals are related to travelling?**

In this section, I will explore the values, which were related to travelling practices in order to explore which values are related to the travel habitus of the respondents.

A theme, which stood out is that the respondent valued certain destinations more than others. For example, some respondents felt that it was important to show their children certain destinations around the world that were valuable to see. Minna explains why she thought it was important for her daughter to see Paris, France:

“I went to Paris with my daughter. I would not have gone there if I would have been travelling by myself, but I thought that it was important to show the city to my daughter, since she had never been there before”

(personal communication, September 24th 2012)

Minna sees Paris as one of the “must see” locations her daughter should see during her life. This is a way of distinguishing between different travel choices; seeing and experiencing certain cities is more valuable, while other destinations are not as noteworthy. Minna is expressing her taste and values by her travel choices and by choosing what she wants to show her daughter.

While other destinations, such as Paris, were seen as valuable to see, others were not deemed as valuable. For example, many respondents did not consider trips to neighboring countries Estonia and Sweden as “real” trips abroad. As Silja says: “Cruises to Sweden...I don’t really consider them as trips abroad” (personal communication, September 26th 2012). This could be due to the fact that the travel to these countries is mostly done by a ferry service or cruise ships which creates a different kind of cultural value for the trip as they are cheap and easy to make. The trips to Estonia and Sweden usually last for less than a day or a few days. The food culture and culture in general in Estonia or Sweden are also not radically different from Finnish culture. Therefore, travelling to Estonia or Sweden does not require any expertise of travelling practices and one does not experience as many cultural differences during these trips, which makes these trips less valuable. However, here it is valuable to keep in mind that other Finnish mothers might consider trips to Estonia and Sweden as more valuable than respondent Silja does. In the eyes of mothers of a lower income or who come from other parts of Finland, might see these trips as very real trips abroad. Further research with a wider respondent sampling could be conducted to gain a fuller picture of how different classes affect values related to travel.

In addition, not only did the different destinations have different value, but variety in destinations in which one travelled is valuable in itself. Some respondents visited different “must see” destinations with their children as a way to collect experiences and as a way to get a picture of the world:

”We have travelled to... London, Paris, Barcelona, Lisbon, Rome... We usually travel to the city that we haven’t seen yet.”

(Kaisa, personal communication, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Kaisa sees these larger cities in Europe as places that are worthy of being seen. It is valuable for her in itself to not just travel to the same destination every time, but to experience a new type of city and culture every time she travels abroad with her children. There is an invisible norm that when travelling abroad it is important to experience something new every time in order for the person to gain more from the trip. Mass tourists are seen to travel to the same place every time, whereas cultured travellers want to see more destinations and learn new things about different countries and cultures. There seems to be an image that if someone travels to the same destination repeatedly, they will not learn and experience as much as they would, if they would travel to a new destination every time.

Another key theme, which emerged is that it is valuable to be able to plan one's trip abroad in a way, which fits the needs of the traveller. The trip needs to fit the traveller's own personality and personality of the other travellers. Many respondents express the need to do certain activities, which are dear to them during their trips; some respondents prefer to learn about the history of the destination, while others want to marvel how the nature of the destination differs from their home country. The respondents expressed that it is very important for them to get something personal out of the trip. As Minna says: "When you plan your own trip, you get exactly what you want. I don't think I could do ready-made trips all the time" (personal communication, September 24th 2012). Doing ready-made package trips insinuates taking a short cut to trip planning and taking a trip designed for the mass tourists, which do not contain any possibilities for self-development. As Iris says: "We won't buy ready-made trips... We make our own trips" (personal communication, October 17th 2012). By designing the trip independently and avoiding mass tourist resorts and ready-made trips, the respondent has a chance to design the trip to fit her individual needs. Therefore, planning a trip yourself and customizing it to your needs is considered valuable.

Another important theme, which arose, is that it is valuable to experience the local culture of the destination one visits; it is an integral part of travelling itself. One of the most popular ways to experience local culture was through eating local foods at local restaurants:

"It's important that we get to eat at local restaurants and not just chain restaurants. It is a part of the experience that we get to try what people eat here. Maybe even our destination selection is dependent on it. I'm not interested in

Asian countries, because the food culture does not interest me as much as in other destinations. “

(Iris, personal communication, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2012)

It was very important for all of the respondents to try local food while travelling. As Iris described, sometimes even destinations were selected based on personal interest towards the local food culture of the destination. Many respondents would not be interested in visiting a country if the country's food culture would not appeal to them. Personal taste in different foods is very important when selecting a destination to visit. Most importantly, the ability to appreciate and want to experience local culture is seen valuable. By the same token, if one does not want to experience local culture, by for example eating local food, it is seen as a less valuable way to travel.

There are many other ways to experience local culture. As Kontogeorgopoulos (2003) stated, cultural authenticity has different meanings for different individuals. All respondents had a need to experience the local culture in their own way, which was valuable to them. As Kaisa explains:

“Going to the supermarket to buy something to eat or riding the subway or going to the park...All those small things are so much fun. We get a lot of energy out of those things. Well, at least I do.”

(personal communication, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Kaisa thought that just the fact that she gets to see different surroundings - how a city's architecture is different or how supermarkets and their selection is different – is a valuable way to experience local culture. Kaisa states that experiencing these small cultural differences is already enough for her to feel satisfied. It is therefore considered valuable that one can find different ways to make a trip meaningful to oneself by experiencing local culture.

In addition, it is important that the respondent's children learn how to appreciate other cultures and experience the local culture of the destination they are visiting. Silja expresses that it is important that her children also try out the local food in the destinations, which they visit:

”Our children like to try out local food and they are open-minded about food. It’s probably because they have had to try out different things ever since they were little. We rarely make any traditional Finnish dishes at home.”

(personal communication, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Silja has made an effort to make sure that her children grow up to be open-minded about different food cultures. Furthermore, she makes a distinction between different kinds of classes of travellers or people in general. It is valuable to be open-minded about different kinds of foods, therefore, if you are not interested in trying local foods, it can be interpreted as a sign of a person’s lack of interest towards other cultures or lack of open-mindedness towards others. It is valuable to not just stick to the traditional, safe foods of your own culture, but to try other food products and appreciate the variety that other food cultures can offer. Importantly, travelling with one’s children and to have them experience different food cultures is valuable and desirable according to the shared travelling habitus of the respondents.

By these examples, we can understand how ideal travelling is supposed to be; trips are supposed to be made to valuable or cultured destinations, the trips themselves are valuable if one is able to design them to your own needs and one is supposed to experience local culture in order for one to be open-minded and experienced of other cultures. The travelling practices that the respondents practice, express which values they think are important to them and their children. Thus, travelling abroad can be seen as an identity building practice, a taste building practice and building of values. The destination one chooses represents one’s taste and values. They travel to gain insight into the different characteristics, which they want to gain. This finding is similar to Blichfeldt’s (2007) claims, as Blichfeldt claims that her respondents were very aware that the trips abroad they made were impacting their daily lives. The experience of travelling thus builds upon the respondents’ identities and is a part of their daily lives. The underlying norm of the travel habitus to the respondents is that travel should be a constant part of everyday life, which should not be changed if one has children.



### 5.3 What risks are associated with travelling?

In this section, I will discuss the rising themes surrounding risks, which emerged during the interviews. The first possible risks that the respondents mentioned were to do with the *physical risks* and the *equipment risks* that could occur during a trip abroad. The main concerns were to do with equipment and environment; the respondents were worried about the safety and comfort of housing in the destination and the safety and reliability of their travel arrangements to the destinations. This finding is similar to Roehl and Fesenmeier's (1992) findings. Roehl and Fesenmeier (1992) claimed in their study that parents travelling with children were mostly concerned with equipment risk and physical risk.

The respondents felt that safety and good quality of the housing on trips abroad became more important when travelling with children. It is important for hotels to be of high quality in order for the travel experience to feel more comfortable and for the parents to not stress as much about the environment in which they would be staying in during the trip. As Kaisa explains: "We usually get pretty good hotels. I won't get low quality hotels when I travel with children. The hotels are nice bases" (personal communication, November 8th 2012). The respondents managed this risk by looking for a safe environment physically, so that their family has a safe place to rest such as a safe, reliable hotel. Comfort, safety and ease are the main criteria for choosing a hotel or airline for the trip.

*Financial risk* was also a factor, as many respondents expressed that money was one of the reasons they could not travel more often in general. The cost of a faraway trip was also the reason why some respondents were saving certain trips for later, in order for their children to gain the most out of the trip. The more expensive the trip is, the more one expects to gain from it personally. However, physical safety and personal satisfaction of the trip were always more pressing concerns than financial risk: that is because the mothers would never spare expense on having high quality hotels for their families on trips abroad.

However, while physical risk and equipment risk were most important to the respondents because they were travelling with their children, *satisfaction risk* was also important to the respondents. It is important for the respondents to feel happy and satisfied after they have made the trip, since they have spent a lot of time, effort and money planning and making the

trip. It is also important that all family members feel satisfied of the trip. However, *social risk* and *psychological risks* were very important to the informants travelling with or without children. Satisfaction risk is highly connected with psychological risk. The respondents consider psychological risk in the sense that they want the trip to reflect their personality and self-image. To manage this risk, the respondents choose a destination which reflects their personality. They also design their trip to fit their personality and personal aspirations by, for example, viewing different restaurant reviews and activities to do online before going on the trip. The respondents are satisfied with the trip, if they are able to travel to the destinations and/or engage in activities which reflect their personality and self-image. In addition, the respondents consider social risk in the sense that they do not want to make trips, which could be seen as reflecting badly on them in their social network. That is, there is a shared perception of which countries are more valuable to travel to and which are not. To prepare for this risk, the respondents choose trips, which are most likely to be accepted in their social network and also give them personal satisfaction. They also ask advice from people in their social network, who are experienced travellers, on where one should travel, to get ideas of which destination could suit their social image and provide the best experiences. This issue is not referred to head on, but there is clearly a distinction between “real trips abroad” or “not real trips abroad”. For example, for many, trips to Estonia and Sweden are socially not considered as “real trips abroad.”

However, some respondents were willing to make compromises on the social risk and psychological risk, such as booking reliable ready-made trips for the sake of their children. Nevertheless, while the respondents had to modify their expectations from the trips abroad, as they had to take their children’s wants and needs into consideration, the parents were still very skilled in finding different ways to make the trip valuable to them personally. Therefore, while the most prevalent risks that were considering were equipment risk and physical risk, the respondents still saw that it is integral to travelling to get something personal out of it, therefore, social, satisfaction and psychological risks are also of great significance at all times. This is due to the nature of travelling itself; because it is taken for granted that one’s travelling choices should reflect one’s personality and identity.

### 5.3.1 How are risks managed?

In this section, I will discuss the different ways in which the respondents chose to prepare for different risks. As discussed earlier, the main risks, which concerned the respondents were the safety of the housing in the destination and transportation to the destination. One key way in which they manage this risk is by using familiar alternatives. Familiarity is thus an important aspect in risk management, similar to Fuchs & Reichel's (2011) claims. If the respondent had used a service before and it had worked well, the service became familiar and became more trustworthy. As Iris explains:

"I would not buy anything from an internet company that I had never heard of before. We usually use the sites that we have used before to book flights or hotels. We book hotels from known chains. We don't use unknown separate hotels, which we don't know. Actually, when you are travelling with a child, you really think about these things more carefully."

(personal communication, October 17th 2012)

Known brands of hotels and airline services create a feeling of trust and familiarity to Iris. Even though chain hotels would not be so interesting or culturally valuable to use when the parents would be travelling by themselves, it becomes important to use them as risk reduction strategies while travelling with children. Therefore, the cultural value of every aspect of the trip, such as accommodation, does not matter as much on every step when children are involved in the trip. However, parents are skilled in finding other ways to find personal satisfaction during the trip, as discussed earlier, so even if the parents have to use a known hotel chain, they can still experience local culture of a country by joining in other activities. Therefore, the ideals of the travel habitus are still at play, even though the physical safety of the children comes first.

Another way of how the respondents' prepared for risk while travelling is by taking cues from other known risks of daily life situations they have experienced before. For example, many respondents manage the safety of their children by making sure that the children were in their line of sight at all times. Erika refuses to leave her child out of her sight when travelling abroad:

“On a cruise ship I never dare to leave my child unsupervised. I always need to be able to see her. I know that there is a small chance that she will get taken by a stranger or she will walk to the deck and fall overboard, but the possibility of that happening still exist.”

(personal communication, October 22nd 2012)

Erika believes that keeping an eye on her child at all times on trips abroad will work as a risk reduction strategy. If she can see what her child is doing and where the child is at all time, no harm can come to her child. This risk reduction strategy is familiar to her from her everyday life but in an even emphasized form, because she is in an unfamiliar environment while travelling. She has found that this risk reduction strategy has worked for her in her daily life, so she keeps implementing it when she goes abroad with her child. The travel habitus and how risks are managed is affected by past experience of risks. This example illustrates how the travel habitus can get influences from the daily lives of respondents.

Another example of the respondents using familiar risk reduction strategies is, taking painkillers and stomachache medicine with them from Finland on the trip. These are known coping devices which the respondents have used before in their daily life that can make travel more comfortable for the whole family. As Kaisa says: “My son has been sick on some of our trips, so I have started taking stomachache pills with me on our trips abroad” (personal communication, November 8th 2012). Kaisa recalled an instance where the stomachache pills would have been useful to have with her and then in the future she learned to take them with her on any trip she made. The painkillers and stomachache medicines do not necessarily represent risk reduction strategies to health issues, but to issues to do with stress and comfort. The medicine is brought along in order to avoid uncomfortable situations; it is an uncomfortable situation if a child has a stomachache in the middle of a nice holiday, but a stomachache pill can solve the issue and make the trip more comfortable and satisfying for all of the travellers. As Sönmez and Graefe (1998) argue, travellers’ previous experience affects how they manage risks. It seemed that if the respondents had not experienced serious health issues and so on abroad, they would rely on their past experience and prepare for the trips as they have done before. They know how to manage risks that they have experienced in the past, such as headaches or stomachache. As Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely (2007) stated, the respondents learned to know which risks to look out for based on their previous experiences.

These are skills that can be accumulated into the travel habitus of the respondents. By experiencing risks and learning to manage them, new travel habits and risk reduction strategies are learned, which can become taken for granted norms of the travel habitus.

There are different ways to manage risks; by taking time to manage them yourself or by delegating risk management to someone else. Some respondents took time and effort to manage risks by themselves beforehand. As a risk reduction strategy, many respondents use time to research and plan comfortable accommodation and comfortable activities, which suit their travel parties' needs. Many respondents felt that reading reviews was an effective strategy on finding out which options were suitable and comfortable for them during their trips abroad. This planning process eased their mood about going on the trip itself:

“It is nice that I don't have to go to a place without knowing anything about it and that I can see in the reviews if the hotel is very noisy or in bad condition. It pays off to read the reviews...It's important to read some of them so that you get some sort of idea of where you are going”.

(Iris, personal communication, October 17th 2012)

Iris places trust on other people's opinions and reviews online. She feels comfortable and less stressed about going on the trip if she has taken the extra time to research hotels and activities. She can relax and feel more comfortable during the trip once she knows that she has planned out which activities and places suite her family's needs while travelling. Other people's opinions and experiences matter to her substantially. Iris also gets tips from her friends and family members who have visited the destination before:

”I look at comments on whether a play is suitable for my child. Something like that, so that I can see other people's comments. I get a lot of information online and through my friends and family who have visited the same destinations.“

(personal communication, October 17th 2012)

According to Iris, people who have experience from a certain destination are considered valuable sources for information. It is a skill to know where to look for information and it is valuable to have a social circle with travellers who travel to destinations that are interesting to you. Iris has learned these risk management skills over time by travelling by herself and with

her family. Once she learned that this way of planning works for her, she will implement it in the future and it becomes a part of her travel habitus. One key risk reduction strategy for her is getting tips and advice from people who have experienced the destinations that she has not.

Some respondents outsource trip planning to other people or even travel professionals. For example, Silja, who enjoys being spontaneous about her trips abroad outsources her travel planning often to travelling agencies by buying ready-made trips when travelling with her children. She trusts that the company will not let her down and will provide a safe, functional travel package for her family. Trip planning can also be outsourced to someone else who is travelling with you and who is a skilled and an experienced traveller. Many respondents mentioned that they knew someone from their social network, who “travelled more than they do” or who they could count on for travel trips on destinations. This acquaintance is someone who travels frequently and has many experiences of different countries. There is a shared trust and respect for experienced and skilled travellers; they are looked up to. If a person does not like planning trips or feels that someone else is good or better at doing the job, the planning is outsourced to someone who is a trusted and skilled traveller. For example, Erika lets her brother do all of their travel arrangements:

“My brother does everything. He sends emails everyone on when the ship leaves and when it arrives and which busses we take once we arrive to the destination and so on. We get a proper list, which makes it easier to go on the trip with kids.”

(personal communication, October 22nd 2012)

Erika trusts her brother to make all of the arrangements. This way she can relax and feel that everything has been taken care of. At the same time, she can also enjoy the element of surprise included in the trip, since she did not plan it. For her, it is a risk reduction strategy to let her experienced brother handle the travelling arrangements and she can trust that everything is taken care of. This outsourcing of trip planning is also a way to outsource responsibility of the trip as well. The respondents can relax better during the trip since they know that they are not solely responsible for the trips success. This is one way of making the trip enjoyable. Outsourcing trip planning to other people or agencies is another way to manage risks according to the shared travel habitus of the respondents.

### 5.3.2 How are different countries perceived in relation to risks?

Sönmez and Graefe (1998) found that their respondents avoided travelling to countries that they perceived to be risky based on their subjective perceptions. I found that between all of the respondents, there was a clear perception of which countries or continents needed more risk management than others. There was a clear distinction between countries in Europe and countries outside Europe. As Iris says: “I don’t think you need to worry about anything when you are in Europe... When you travel outside of Europe, it is a different situation” (personal communication, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2012). Iris considers Europe as an area, which is considered safe to travel to without any extra preparation. This meant that there was no need to prepare in any special way for possible risks that could occur in European countries. This has become as taken for granted image embedded in the travel habitus.

In addition, a more extreme example of how a perception of a country can affect risk perception can be found in the perception of travelling to Estonia and Sweden. As mentioned earlier, all of the respondents did not consider trips to Estonia and Sweden “real trips abroad.” The trips have a lower value in terms of experiencing culture or “seeing the world.” This image also affects how respondents prepare for the trip to Estonia and Sweden. Because Sweden and Estonia are so familiar and close destinations, many forget that they even made trips there or they do not count them as “real trips” abroad. This could affect how risks are perceived in these destinations.

The respondents had a unified notion that when travelling outside of Europe one had to prepare for travel more significantly. The first thing that the respondents thought about when planning to travel to countries in Asia, Africa or South America was to find out which travel vaccines or other travel medicines were recommended by health care professionals. As Kaisa explains:

“When I was planning to travel to Africa with my kids, I knew that I was supposed to go to the doctor and to get the vaccines and malaria medicines. I knew, of course, that I had to do that.”

(personal communication, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Kaisa describes getting vaccines for trips to African countries as a taken for granted truth. All of the respondents who had travelled outside of Europe had gotten information about travel medicine and taken the recommended medicine for the trip. This is clear indication that taking travel medicine is another invisible, taken for granted practice of the travel habitus. In addition, the acts of consulting a travel health professional and taking the travel medicine are taken for granted norms. The travel health professionals give advice on how they should prepare themselves before a trip abroad if they want to prepare for the trip appropriately. If the travel health professional advises the respondents directly on which medicine they need to take, they do not question it. They are playing the part of the how the appropriate traveller should behave and do not rebel against it.

Interestingly, many respondents did not remember which vaccines or medicines they had taken for their previous trips. It was difficult for them to remember the process of taking the medicine or vaccine and remembering the name of the vaccine. As Minna describes which vaccination she took on a trip to Asia: "Oh no, I'm not sure what it was..." (personal communication, September 24th 2012). One reason why it is so difficult for respondents to remember which vaccine they received is because the process of thinking about the travel medicine was outsourced to the medical professionals in the first place. Therefore, it is also an unquestioned norm that travellers do not necessarily need to know the specifics of which medicines they are taking, as long as they ask a professional how it should be done. This clearly has an impact on travel risk perception of the respondents. Because the respondent are used to not having to know which medicine they are taking on their trips abroad, they are accustomed to the practice that they do not need to put effort in understanding exactly which vaccine or medicine they have taken. Therefore, the ways in which travel consultation is organized and becomes embedded in habits becomes a part of the travel habitus of the respondents.

What is interesting is that the vaccines or other travel related medicines are not necessarily thought of as a health issues that need to be tackled before trips, but a necessary part of the planning process of travelling. As Minna says, taking a vaccine before a trip is just "like packing a suitcase" (personal communication, September 24th 2012). Once a person has taken a vaccine, he or she feels that they do not need to think about it any longer, because the process has been dealt with. The respondents thus do not put a lot of emphasis on remembering what the vaccine was or worrying what other health concerns they might be



susceptible too. After all, people do not go abroad to fear which health issue could face them when they are abroad, as it is not a part of the ideal adventurous, hedonistic and carefree way of travelling.

This is clear indication that taking travel medicine if you are travelling outside Europe is another invisible, taken for granted rule of the travel habitus. In addition, the acts of consulting a travel health professional and taking the travel medicine before travelling outside of Europe are what a traveller is supposed to do. The main way to reduce risks of travelling to those destinations is by finding out which medicines need to be taken and then take them. It is regarded as a standard procedure of travel preparations, which is taken for granted. This finding is congruent with Hyrynen's (2010) findings. It seems that the respondents in this study place emphasis on getting vaccines by pre-travel consultations with travel health professionals instead of also looking for other information on how to prepare for possible health risks abroad.

In addition, as Leder, Chan and Wilson (2012) claim, in pre-travel consultations, there is an emphasis on preparing for trips one at a time. Even though the respondents considered travelling as being a standard staple of their life, the respondents prepared for trips one at a time, which influences how they prepare for possible risks of trips abroad. The respondents did not prepare ahead of time for different risks that could occur on trips several years ahead of time. When the country, which the respondents would travel was decided, then preparation for possible risks could begin. Preparations for the trips abroad were done on country-by-country basis. Many respondents sought to see health professionals only when they had confirmed that a trip was going to take place. Therefore, it is a norm for the respondents to only make preparations for the country that they are sure that they are going to visit. Therefore, the ways in which travel health risk procedures are prepared for in Finnish culture affect risk perception and the shared travel habitus.

Another rising theme was that countries, which the respondents found interesting to them personally, were not considered as risky as other countries which the respondents did not have a personal interest in. Sönmez and Graefe (1998) found that their respondents avoided travelling to countries that they perceived to be risky based on their subjective perceptions. I found that my respondents did not avoid certain countries based solely on their risks, but rather, because they were not interested enough in the local culture or activities available in

the destination. Travelling to certain countries is a very personal experience to many of the respondents, as discussed before. Many respondents had at least one country in mind where they longed to travel one day or an area which they had already travelled repeatedly. The respondents expressed personal, special attachment to these destinations. They felt that they were so interested in the local culture and ways of life in the destination, which appealed to them deeply. Because of these personal attachments, they were more likely not to consider the possible travel risks as hindrances for the trips made to these countries.

Erika's interest towards India functions as an example of this finding. When asked if she would avoid any countries because of any possible risks, Erika expressed that she avoided countries such as the United States because she did not like the culture of the country and thought that her child would be overwhelmed by the local culture. In addition, she stated that she probably would not want to visit countries, such as Egypt or Middle Eastern countries, because she was uncertain if people knew English in these countries or if basic amenities were available. However, she dreamt of going to India with her daughter one day. She was also adamant not to visit the mass tourist destinations in India, since she wanted to experience the "real India." She is fascinated with Indian culture and for many years it has been a dream of hers to travel there. Erika did say that she knew she had to prepare differently for the trip and to be more careful than on trips to Europe, especially when travelling with her child, but that still would not put her off from travelling to India in general.

Why Erika did not wish to travel to the United States, Egypt or Middle Eastern countries was not the possible lack of English speakers, or lack of amenities or the fear that her child would not react well to the culture of the destination. Rather, the issue is that Erika was not interested in these cultures as much as she is interested in Indian culture and India as a destination. If the respondents were infatuated with a certain culture or a certain destination, the other inconveniences or risks do not matter as much. The possible risks should not hinder one from travelling and achieving one's dream of visiting a certain country and experiencing something personal and profound.

There is a clear attitude of open-mindedness towards the countries which the respondents are fascinated with, which included being open-minded towards the possible risks, which could occur in the destinations. Interestingly, many of the respondents thought that there is no country where they would absolutely not travel with or without their children. Many said that

they chose their destinations based on their own interests relating to the destination, however, many respondents said that they would be willing to travel anywhere, if they were handed the tickets for free to any destination. One respondent stated that it is possible to travel anywhere with children. Kaisa explains: “I think it is possible to travel anywhere with kids. I’m just not as interested in every destination that much” (personal communication, November 8th, 2012). This could be due to the fact that an ideal traveller should be open to exploring any countries and cultures.

### **5.3.3 How does past travelling experience influence risk perception?**

Furthermore, another rising theme surrounding risk perception was the attitude surrounding possible risks in relation to one’s personal experience of travelling. Sönmez and Graefe (1998) claim that the individual’s perception of risks is based on two main criteria; firstly, perceptions of risk which they had not experienced, which is based on their subjective perceptions and secondly, perceptions of known risk, which they had experienced themselves. I found that the past travelling experience of the respondents had an impact on how they perceived risks related to travelling abroad. Many respondents expressed confidence in their travelling abilities, which affected the way they considered risks abroad. They expressed that they felt confident that they would be fine on their trips abroad, because they had travelled many times before. As Iris says: “When you have experience, you don’t get scared so easily. You trust yourself that you will be okay” (personal communication, October 17th 2012). Iris has travelled many times before and has managed to have positive experiences while travelling.

Interestingly, many respondents were aware that they might feel confident of their travel skills because they had never experienced any severe accidents or incidents on their trips abroad. If the respondents had not experienced certain types of risks on their various trips abroad, they would only manage risks, which they found mattered to them. As Minna explains:

“I don’t really think ahead about what possible bad things could happen (when travelling abroad). I’m that kind of a person that if something happens, I think I will figure it out one way or another. I’m not that kind of person who would think of a plan B or who would plan ahead in case something does not go well. I

don't really have any experiences of things going badly. Maybe that is why I kind of trust that things will go well.”

(personal communication, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2012)

Minna's practical experiences on her trips abroad have affected the way she perceives risks abroad. She has not experienced any severe risk situations abroad, so she does not plan for them in advance. None of my respondent had ever experienced any serious accidents or incidences abroad, so their experience has told them that they probably will not experience them in the future if they keep travelling the same way as they have before. Therefore, their past experience of risks affects how the respondents prepare for risks of travelling. The respondents expressed confidence on their travelling capabilities after experiencing positive experiences while travelling. This finding is similar to Huang & Hsu's (2009) and Neal and Gursoy (2008) research findings; the more one travels and has positive experiences, the more likely one is to have a positive attitude towards travelling in the future. Iris' and Minna's comment also indicate that to not be scared and to be able to improvise during a trip if something small goes wrong are both ideal qualities for a traveller to have. As mentioned before, ideally travelling is supposed to be a fun, hedonistic activity, which also has a sense of adventure, therefore, worrying about everything that could go wrong would spoil the atmosphere of the trip. In addition, it would be very exhausting to think about every possible risk, which could occur, if you have no personal experience of them.

Furthermore, some respondents even recognized that they were willing to disregard some risks while travelling, because worrying about every possible risk that could happen abroad would interfere with the hedonistic nature of travelling. For example, experiencing local food was one key way to experience the local culture of a destination and it is almost a necessary hedonistic activity embedded in travelling. Salla said that she knows there is a slight possibility of contracting something if she eats local foods abroad in certain destinations; however, she still eats any local food she wants to eat, because she does not want to miss out on experiencing local food on her trips abroad (personal communication, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2012). Here again, to constantly think of risks related to trying local food does not suit the atmosphere of traveling, as travelling is supposed to be a break from the everyday routine and a hedonistic activity according to the shared travel habitus.

In summation, I found that the risk perception of the respondents was affected, first, by past practical experience; their past travel experiences and their past experiences of risks and second, their subjective perceptions of risk surrounding countries and cultures. While the respondents have their subjective notions of certain countries based on their personal interests, they also shared a perception of risks related to certain groups of countries: in Europe one does not need to prepare as much for risks as in countries outside Europe. Therefore, their travel habitus contains taken for granted notions of which areas are safer than others and how one should manage risks when travelling to different destinations. As the travel habitus is a constellation of lived experiences, values and practices; the respondents past experience and subjective perceptions affect how they manage risk in the future. Because travelling abroad is a multifaceted phenomenon, which involves choices based on one's values and self-image, risk perception is bound to be affected by these multifaceted processes. Past travelling experience of people is important to study in order to understand why certain risks are managed while others are not; if one has not experienced something severe on a trip, it is difficult to start thinking about the risks if it does not seem to apply to you. Because travel is ideally supposed to mold one as a person and provide life-altering experiences in accordance to their travel habitus, health risks are not always at the forefront of traveller's minds. In addition, it would be very difficult for a traveller to be aware of all the possible risks of travelling and still enjoy the adventurous and hedonistic sides of the trip. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how people perceive and prepare for different risks while travelling abroad, the past experience of people, which mold their perceptions of risks and their subjective perceptions of risks should be scrutinized.

## **6. Conclusions**

### **6.1 Main insights**

This thesis focused on exploring how travelling abroad is a part of the lives of Finnish mothers, what travel signifies to them and how risks related to travel are a part of the process of travelling with children. Travelling is not a completely separate part of their daily life; the practices and values related to travelling abroad are influenced by the values and practices the mothers encounter in their daily life and vice versa. These practices and values in turn influence how the mothers manage and perceive risks in relation to travelling. If we understand which values, needs and wants go into travelling practices, risk perception in relation to travelling can be better understood. Here I will outline the main insight of this thesis.

#### **Insight 1: Travel is an ideal part of life for Finnish mothers**

A key insight is that travelling abroad regularly is an ideal aspect of the lives of mothers. Travelling abroad is seen to have many positive aspects; it provides a break from a routine, it is a leisurely and fun activity, it allows one to experience other cultures and experience something new and exciting. Travel is also seen to have positive effects on a person. By gaining experiences of travelling abroad, people can work on their personalities by becoming more cultured, courageous, adventurous, and open-minded towards other cultures and different ways of life. It is important for children to experience travelling in order to grow up with these qualities.

#### **Insight 2: Ideal trips are designed to fit families' personal wants and needs**

Another key insight of this research is that travel practices are seen to have certain values and respondents seemed to have shared ideas of what ideal travelling is. From the interviews with respondents, I shared ideals, values and practices emerged which define the shared travel habitus; that is the ideal way in which one should travel. Ideal travelling contains several aspects; first, it is ideal to plan trips one's own without the help of a travel agent in order for the trips to fit the needs and personality of the individual and of potential co-travellers.

Second, it is ideal to experience local culture during one's trip, as experiencing other cultures is seen to make one more open-minded and cultured. Third, variety in travelling destinations is ideal, as every new destination allows the respondents to experience and learn something new. Travelling is seen as a practice through which one can identify themselves with the values and practices they choose to express during their trips abroad.

**Insight 3: Physical safety is the most important while travelling with children, yet personal satisfaction of parents is never disregarded completely**

The most common risks that the respondents were concerned about while travelling with their children were *physical risk* and *equipment risk*, that is, the physical safety of housing and transportation to the destination. However, I found that the respondents were also concerned with *psychological risk*, *social risk* and *satisfaction risk*. That is, the respondents were concerned whether a trip would reflect their personality and values, be appropriate in the eyes of their peers and satisfy their personal interests. These risks were considered when selecting a destination and activities to do during the trip, as it is important to the respondents to gain personal satisfaction out of the trip. Consideration of psychological risk, social risk and satisfaction risk are embedded in selection practices of destination and activities, because travel practices are supposed to display the personal values of the respondents. Therefore, the travel habitus of the respondents has an effect on the risk perception of the respondents.

**Insight 4: Mothers learn which risks to manage**

Another result is that past experiences of respondents had an effect on how they perceive risks in relation to travelling. Many respondents learned which risks they should manage through their practical experience of travelling; they learned which risks were useful for them to consider and which were not. Many respondents had not experienced severe risks situations on their trips abroad, which increased their confidence of their current travelling capabilities. Through practical experience and repeated travelling the respondents had gained an understanding of which ways of travelling function for them. They have gathered these practices in their travelling habitus and they have become taken for granted norms to them.

**Insight 5: There is a shared perception of risk management and travel health consultation**

Another key insight is that the respondents had shared perceptions on how risks should be managed on different continents and when would be an appropriate time to consult a travel health professional. Overall, the respondents perceived Europe to be a “safe” area to travel, where one did not need to place extra emphasis on health risk management. However, when travelling outside of Europe, respondents had a clear perception that travel health care experts should be consulted in order to find out the proper pre-travel medications needed for the trip. The emphasis of the consultation is on the pre-travel medication and not on any other travel health related issue. The travel consultation was seen as a necessary part of preparing for travel abroad when travelling outside of Europe and is done on a trip-by-trip basis. These perceptions are unquestioned norms surrounding risk perception that are a part of the travelling habitus of the respondents. The ways in which travel consultation processes are arranged are a part of the travel habitus.

#### **Insight 6: Personal interest towards a destination affects how risks are perceived**

The subjective perceptions the respondents had of different countries affected how they perceived risks in different destinations. The respondents did not avoid countries solely based on whether the country felt risky, but because they were not interested in the culture of a certain country or destination. The respondents were also more likely to not focus on the risks of their favorite destination, as in these destinations risk are perceived to be more manageable and should not hinder one from experiencing the destination which is special to them. This finding shows how psychological risk and satisfaction risk affect the choice of travel destination and risk perception. Psychological risk and satisfaction risk are both an inherent part of travel planning, even when travelling with children. Even though safety of children is top priority to parents who travel, the expression of personality and values is closely connected to every travelling choice due to the ideal values connected to the travel habitus.

## **6.2 Applicability**

By studying how people’s previous experience, habits and value shape their travel practices and risk management, a deeper understanding of risk perception processes can be reached. The insights of this thesis illustrate how certain travel habits and perceptions of risk form. If



these processes are understood, new ways of communicating about risks or educating people about travel risks can be implemented. The values that Finnish mothers put into travelling can be used for communication purposes concerning travel risk management in several ways. First, if travel is understood as a valuable experience which makes one a more open-minded, cultured person and it is communicated to people as such, the target group can be reached effectively and their needs and wants towards travelling practices can be better understood. Second, the taken for granted shared perception of safety of countries can be addressed in communicational efforts to better understand risks of travelling abroad and how perceptions of travel risks form. Third, it is also valuable to understand how personal interest in a country or culture can affect risk perception; this insight can be used in communicational purposes. GlaxoSmithKline can use these insights to better communicate the different aspects of risk management and risk perception to Finnish audiences. By studying travel practices and values related to travel practices and risks, a deeper, multifaceted understanding of risk perception can be uncovered which in turn can aid communicating efforts surrounding travel risk management.

### **6.3 Indications of further research needs**

Finnish risk perception in relation to travelling abroad can be investigated further in the future. It is valuable to look into the different groups of Finns and how they perceive risks in relation to travelling. My respondents were all from the Helsinki metropolitan district, where there are more opportunities to travel abroad than other parts of Finland. It would be valuable to investigate other areas of Finland to see what differences can be found in access to information about travelling, access to ways to travel and how income affects travel practices in these areas.

In addition, it could be valuable to study how the Finnish health care culture affects travel health decisions and risk perception. The respondents of this study relied on health care professionals to know for them which travel medicine they should take in order to prepare for the trip. The emphasis was on the vaccinations and malaria medicine when travelling outside of Europe. In addition, it would be valuable to study how information is gathered about health issues in relation to travel. By understanding which values go into such travelling practices,

an additional understanding of why and how different risks related to travel are perceived can be gained.

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