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The Pursuit of Popular Genealogy

by

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A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Popular genealogy is the collection and study of genealogical information in non-kin-based societies, i.e. those in which kinship institutions do not primarily govern the determination of social status and the devolution of property and political authority. Over the past thirty years in North America, popular genealogy has grown considerably as a leisure pursuit, partly as a result of the worldwide trends toward digitization of records and access to personal computers. This thesis is an anthropological study of popular genealogy in the city of Calgary, Alberta. It uses a variety of descriptive and analytical methods to document (1) who engages in popular genealogy and (2) what they do when they are practicing popular genealogy, and (3) how they relate socially to one another around the pursuit of genealogy, and finally (4) how they conceptualize and explain their genealogical activities.

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I thank Ronald Lambert for giving me valuable advice on interviewing genealogists and his thorough studies on the pursuit of genealogy provided me with a strong academic study from which I could compare my own.

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This thesis is dedicated to my father, William Carter, who has been an enthusiastic supporter of my academic career and my interest in genealogy, as I assumed the role of family historian from his father.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| AFHS..... | Alberta Family Histories Society |
| LDS Centre..... | Church of Latter Day Saints Genealogical Resource Centre |
| DAR..... | Daughters of the American Revolution |
| FHS..... | Family History Society |
| HP..... | Hobbyist, Public System |
| IGI..... | International Genealogical Index |
| OGS..... | Ontario Genealogical Society |
| PAP..... | Professional, Amateur, Public System |
| SIG..... | Special Interest Group |
| WSGS..... | Wisconsin State Genealogical Society |

WARNING: GENEALOGY POX
(Very contagious to Adults)

SYMPTOMS: Continual complaint as to need for names, dates, and places. Patient has a blank expression, sometimes deaf to spouse and children. Has no taste for work of any kind, except feverishly looking through records at libraries and courthouses. Has compulsion to write letters. Swears at mailman when he doesn't leave mail. Frequents strange places such as cemeteries, ruins, and remote, desolate country areas. Makes secret night calls, hides phone bills from spouse and mumbles to self. Has strange, faraway look in eyes.

NO KNOWN CURE

TREATMENT: Medication is useless. Disease is not fatal, but gets progressively worse. Patient should attend genealogy workshops, subscribe to genealogical magazines and be given a quiet corner in the house where he or she can be alone.

REMARKS: The unusual nature of the disease is ---- The sicker the patient gets, the more he or she enjoys it!!

Southwest Nebraska Genealogical Society, Ancestors Unlimited Quarterly

THE PURSUIT OF POPULAR GENEALOGY

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an anthropological study of popular genealogy in Western Canada at the beginning of the Twenty-first century. Over the past several decades, the pursuit of genealogy has become one of the more popular leisure activities in the Western world and it shows no signs of reaching its peak of popularity. The term 'popular' genealogy

refers to the tracing of unknown or forgotten ancestors and kin by research in family or public records. Popular genealogy is characteristic of complex and large-scale societies in which kinship plays a relatively minor role in defining a person's personal status and legal obligations. [People of the Western world] may, as a matter of personal interest, embark on such genealogical research as part of a quest for personal identity or 'roots',..., and many commercial enterprises have been established to cater to this interest and to facilitate genealogical searches and transport to 'old countries' (Hatt 1997:142).

As I shall show in detail in the following chapter, the recording and reckoning of family lines and relationships has been a basic feature of human social life over most of human history. In kin-based societies, genealogy can be said to have a practical purpose, since politics and economics are based on and function within parameters of relationships defined by kinship ties. In this system birthright is the essential social principle, as it determines most of a person's place and role in society. In 'civic' societies, on the other hand (to use Morgan's terminology), centralized and impersonal governmental institutions have assumed the role of defining and enforcing societal laws. In such societies, which are usually characterized by urban life, large, corporate kinship groups fade and lose their social functions and the range of kinship reckoning is reduced, while

at the same time the importance of the individual and individual accomplishment is increased. In these societies genealogy has a less practical purpose, as extended family are not required or obligated to intervene in public disputes and a person's role and social identity are not solely based on their kinship ties.

We come now to the key problem of this thesis. If kinship groups and kinship reckoning are generally on the decline in civic societies, how can we explain the rise of popular genealogy in the West in recent decades? From a purely practical and functional point of view, Western Europe and North America in the late Twentieth century are the last places and time when one might expect a resurgence in genealogical thinking and activity. These are societies in which the ideology of individualism and the cult of self-realization of the individual (as evidenced by the vast outpouring of books and television programs about individual development and self fulfilment) are particularly developed social features.

Personal identity in the post-modern era of the Western world has "been rendered soft, fluid, endlessly open to the exercise of the will and the imagination" of individuals (Raban in Harvey 1990:5). The pursuit of genealogy can be a means by which people construct their self-identity as they find a new role within the family structure and associate themselves with their ethnic heritage.

I am certainly not suggesting that the resurgence of an interest in genealogy represents some sort of "regression" to earlier stages of society – this should be become clear when I survey and compare a select number of kin-based societies in Chapter Two. It is, however, in some measure linked to the development and widespread diffusion of

digital technologies in the societies in which popular genealogy grew up in the latter half of the Twentieth century – a period sometimes referred to as the “information age”.

This thesis is an anthropological exploration of the phenomenon of popular genealogy from the perspective of Western Canada. By the term “anthropological exploration” I am implying two things. First, I wish to investigate the phenomenon through the eyes, so to speak, of those who practice it. In this sense I want to capture how they see and describe the world, in their own words. Second, I want to place these “phenomenological” accounts in a broader world-historical perspective, which takes account of the nature of post-modern culture and technology.

Most centrally, I am interested in understanding, both from an “inside” and an “outside” perspective, what inspires people to research their family history and what satisfaction they experience from genealogy. Through personal interviews with genealogists and a random mail-out survey the answers to these issues will be addressed.

As noted, the pursuit of popular genealogy represents a relatively recent phenomenon, and I will conclude this introduction with a consideration of the varied circumstances that seem to be connected with its resurgence.

The celebration of both Canada’s centennial and the United States of America’s bicentennial triggered the interest in many North Americans to begin the search for their family history. The popular saga of Alex Haley’s book *Roots* was another great inspiration for many to take up the pursuit of genealogy. As these events have only happened within the last forty years there has been little academic research conducted on the impact and affect the pursuit of popular genealogy can have on a person. As such there are only a handful of studies to use as a comparison for this thesis, but perhaps the

information learned through this study will add to the growing knowledge on the role popular genealogy has in the Western world.

The advent of personal home computers and the internet has brought genealogy into a new age, where so much information can be acquired from the comfort of home and stored and sorted in complex computer programs, designed to not only organize lineage charts but to sort photos and personal life stories of ancestors into a comprehensive family history book. These compilations can now be found in public libraries as personal tales of historic events are added to national historic records.

It would be hard to imagine popular genealogy without the computer and internet, but on the other hand, it would be an error to attempt to reduce popular genealogy to its technological base alone. For one thing, genealogical work done earlier in the Twentieth century used paper charts and index cards and letters sent through the mail are still used today despite email. For another thing, as we shall see later on, popular genealogy follows a pattern shared by a number of other serious leisure activities in late modern and post-modern culture, and this is largely independent of its technological base in personal computers and the internet. These technological forms seem to have been significant in the transforming of popular genealogy into a *mass* activity, i.e. from an activity of several thousands to an activity of several millions, but it is important to note that popular genealogy, essentially in its contemporary form, predated the widespread use of computers. We might sum this up by saying that computer technology seems to be an asset, although not a necessity of popular genealogy, as we know it today in North America.

Genealogists tend to enjoy sharing their knowledge and stories with others. As such there is a strong and vibrant community for genealogists to become active participants. Family history societies, seminars and courses provide a forum for people to share ideas, thoughts and advice with fellow genealogists. What makes this community so strong is that it is made up of a variety of people. Although there are some general characteristics found among genealogists, they cannot be neatly categorized into any one type of person. Men and women, young and old, full time workers and retirees all actively pursue genealogy. One common characteristic is that genealogists enjoy researching historical information.

The research into one's family history can be overwhelming, as it seems that there are endless sources for information. Knowing valid information from unsubstantiated stories can confuse a neophyte genealogist. Through the genealogy community and the many books on how to research family history, a person can learn not only how to determine what is valid evidence, but also how to organize and sort through the information. The amount of time, money and travel plans invested in genealogy can vary, as one of the appealing aspects of genealogy is that it is a flexible endeavour, allowing people to invest as much or as little as they choose and still be able to pursue their family history.

Theories of commitment and serious leisure activities will be applied to the pursuit of popular genealogy to show that for the majority of people who do research their family history it becomes something more than just a hobby they casually engage in when they have the time. Many genealogists develop a new sense of independence and accomplishment through their diligent work on their family history. As mentioned

above, one's self-identity can be reconstituted as one develops a new role within the family structure as family historian, where meaning is brought to their life as they preserve and share their information with interested relatives. The pursuit of popular genealogy can have an impact on all aspects of a person's life, from one's self-identity to their social interaction and the value they place on family, tradition and history.

CHAPTER TWO

CROSS-CULTURAL SURVEY

In order to understand why the popular genealogy of the early Twenty-first century is *not* simply a revival of the types of practices and thinking common in 'traditional' societies of the sort studied in anthropological courses on kinship and marriage, it is necessary to recapitulate briefly what those practices and beliefs are, and that is the purpose of this chapter.

Broadly defined, genealogy is the descent line of ancestors and a record of family history. In literate societies the descent line is usually charted in a table or family tree format where the earliest known ancestor is at the top and all subsequent generations are listed below in order of descent. In oral cultures (by definition), genealogical information needs to be 'stored' in the memories and consciousness of living persons and passed along from generation to generation. Oral cultures, the majority of which are socially structured around kinship, use genealogy as a means of determining social interaction and where there are little material goods, relationships often serve as tools for reciprocity and alliances. Many of the classic processes of kinship, such as the summing up of entire groups of people into heroic founders or into corporate entities, as well as the telescoping of generations, derive from the necessity to economize on details and bits of information that are required to be stored in human memory.

Genealogy can also be defined as the *study of* ancestors and family history. This definition of genealogy fits the role of a genealogist in the Western world. Genealogy became a popular leisure activity for Europeans and North Americans in the mid-Twentieth century. In Canada, the 1964 centennial of the country had the government encourage people to look into their family history and share stories of their pioneer

ancestors. As well, the bicentennial for the United States in 1976 triggered many to dig for their family roots. Alex Haley's book *Roots*, published in 1977 in the United States, and the subsequent movie, made genealogy a popular activity for people throughout the Western world (Harvey 1990:87). Today, there are millions of internet web sites dedicated to the search for ones roots, as well as countless family history societies (FHSs), magazines and archives, there to assist in the pursuit of genealogy.

The Nineteenth century anthropological theorists held that civilization was first structured on a kinship polity, where politics and economics are based and function within kinship ties. In this system is it important to know who is related to whom, as help, status and privilege is based on one's birthright. As society changes over time there tends to be a shift from a kinship polity to a civic polity, where rights and privileges are given equally to all *citizens* of the community. A person's birthright does not give them special status in this form of society. Although, social and evolution theorists do hold that there is status in a civic polity, as ascribed status (one's birthright) still affects a person's place in society but here one can also have achieved status, where through choice and training a person can change the status they were born in. In a kinship polity, a person's status does not change as it is solely determined by birthright (Morgan 1877).

In a civic polity the state mediates between contract disputes, instead of family members. As a society changes from being kin based to civic based the kinship relationships move from the public sphere to the private sphere of society. People come to trust the state for support and protection, where they would have relied on kin relations in the past (Morgan 1877). Historic states, such as Rome and Greece clearly show this

pattern of change (Engels 1972) as well as modern states, such as Ghana in Africa (Fortes 1969:91).

England is a contemporary example of how the two polities have merged. England's political system is comprised of elected officials, but is ultimately run by the Royal family, which is based on a kinship polity, as membership and status is based on birthright. The kinship polity also extends to noble Englishmen as the title of knighthood or Baronet is passed down to the eldest son or the next male heir. One's family status then can influence which schools are attended and which jobs are secured.

In America, membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will offer a person status and privileges for other institutions, such as admittance to private schools, universities and even jobs. The only way to obtain DAR membership is by genealogical proof of being a descendant of an American soldier of the Revolution.

In this chapter I will discuss what genealogy has meant in kinship based cultures of the world. To keep this discussion brief, five societies have been selected from a broad range of cultures to highlight various aspects of genealogical thinking and practice. The Aborigines of Australia; the Avungara of the Azande of Central Africa; the Maori of New Zealand; the Kurdish people from Southwest Asia, and the Koreans of East Asia will be reviewed. What genealogy means to these people will be explored, mainly by showing its use in their daily lives.

I will then discuss how genealogy has become a popular leisure activity in the civic polity of the Western world. The history of this form of genealogy will be explored as it developed from Greek and Roman times, through the Middle Ages, to its current use in popular culture.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

Genealogy is fundamental to the social organization of Australian Aborigines, as there are several rules of marriage; all depending on which lineage group the people belong. Aborigine society is divided into moieties that have several clans in each. Their marriage system is exogamous in relation to the moieties, patrilocal and patrilineal, as well as being polygamous (Rose 1960:17). This system unites clans over vast areas, where a person can travel and still stay with relatives as they are tied through bonds of marriage.

Common arrangements in marriage are the sister exchange and cross cousin marriage (ibid:117). In an effort to strengthen clan ties men will often exchange their sisters in marriage. This exchange may not literally be sisters, as there is often a large age difference between brothers and the sisters they want to exchange. However, it is common for a man to take a wife who is twenty years younger than himself (ibid:120). The "sister" exchange is a general concept and the reality of the situation is that women are exchanged across two clans, and are not necessarily sisters (Falkenberg 1981:36). The notion, from A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, is that when a bride is taken from her clan, that clan suffers a loss, for which they must be compensated. The result is a straight exchange of women across the two clans (ibid:35). A man will have obligations to his wife's clan, but in return he benefits from his association with them (ibid:61).

Cross cousin marriages are another form of marriage for the Aborigines, and they come in various types. There are bilateral and unilateral, as well as matrilateral and patrilateral cross cousin marriages. Based on the age differences of girls and their husbands, Frederick Rose feels that cross cousin marriages are unlikely, but that second

cousin marriages are more frequent (ibid:120-128). Never the less, cross cousin marriages strengthen alliances between the clans as they become interlinked through the various marriages of their members.

An interesting aspect of this system is the exchange of women as possessions of their fathers to their husbands (Radcliffe-Brown 1961:34). Clans have rights over their territory and they also have rights over their membership. Members of the clan have duties they must perform for the clan but in return are given support in times of need. In this system women are regarded as possessions as they pass from their father's home to their husband's, and ultimately become the possession of their husband's clan (ibid:35). Women, in this system, are passed around for the benefit of clan coalitions. This arrangement replaces object exchanges when alliances are formed between two clans.

Arranged marriages are common and girls are often promised to a man before they are even born (Falkenberg 1981:61). However, the groom often does not marry his betrothal as the girl may die or is "stolen" by another man before she is able to marry (Rose 1960:19). This "theft" can result in killing as the prospective groom seeks compensation for his lost bride. In these situations the clan often comes to the aid of the man, and feuds erupt between the clans (Radcliffe-Brown 1961:35). However, just the betrothal act will raise the status of a man as he gains rights and privileges from the clan to which his wife's daughter will be married into (Falkenberg 1981:61).

Clan membership determines which people are able to marry as well as arranged marriages. In place of bride prices and dowries, women are exchanged to strengthen alliances between clans. Each clan receives a wife who becomes a member of her

husband's clan and hence works and produces children for his clan. One's genealogy is essential as it determines possible clan coalitions.

AVONGARA

The Avongara of the Azande people of the Sudan form the ruling caste in their society. They are distinguished from common Azande in every aspect of daily life. They live a comparatively leisured life and do not do field labour (Baxter and Butt 1953:53). The legitimacy of their claim to rule is dependent on their descent in the patriline from Ngura, the historical ancestor of all Avongara (Evans-Pritchard 1971:432). They are so preoccupied with questions of lineage and interrelationships that many employ court historians, or elders, to memorize their genealogical pedigrees and succession rights (Baxter and Butt 1953:53).

This focus on the importance of lineage does not extend to the common Azande, who have no social incentive to preserve the memory of their descent, reportedly only keeping track as far back as three generations. However, they do memorize the lineages and myths that confirm the legitimacy of their chiefs, "because it is through them that their common feelings of political unity are expressed" (ibid). The common Azande feel tied and loyal to their chief as he represents their political interests. Political units are strengthened through the personal relationships between the commoners and the nobles as such the unit is only secure as long as their political leader is in power. As the Avongara are the political leaders they symbolize the enduring principles and historical continuity of the society as a whole. "The Avongara dynasty created the Zande nation and through them the Zande nation is perpetuated" (ibid).

E. E. Evans-Pritchard pointed out that human memory is limited and as such not every generation or descendent is remembered from the time of Ngura. However, this would never be admitted because political authority rests on clear lines of descent being established. Evans-Pritchard believed that the names of distant ancestors are dropped as new members are added, because the length of the lineage never seems to get any longer (1971:427). As the lineage becomes a myth over time the details are lost and socially distant kin are dropped off the lineage. An Azande will not say if they believe the lineage to be true or not. “They only think that it could be true, for it is what their fathers told them” (ibid:428).

This general uncertainty allows for different stories about the descent of an Avongara family. This ambiguity also causes political debates and claims to rule to be questioned; hence the need for court historians. Forged genealogies can then be created for the Avongara who want to establish their claim to rule.

MAORI

The Maori of Polynesia’s New Zealand, have a kinship consisting of cognatic descent groups called *hapuu*, meaning that they equally recognize descent from both sides of the family. The *hapuus* are non-local, comprised of dispersed descent groups as well as local core groups. Since the *hapuus* are cognatic there is much overlap in terms of membership and ancestral ties. In this sense they are not sub-tribes, but rather multi-tribal (Webster 1997).

Although the *hapuu* still exist in contemporary Maori, they have lost many of their original functions. The *hapuu* provided a means for social interaction and regular

assembly, but as many Maori moved to urban centres, contact with their *hapuu* was lost and hence so was its importance. In 1865, the Europeans established the Native Land Court in an attempt to break down “tribalism”. This was done by making land ownership individual instead of owned by the *hapuu*, thus dividing the family structure (ibid).

The genealogical reckoning of ancestors was known as the *whakapapa*, which legitimatised the main descent lines of each *hapuu*. One function of the *hapuu* was to establish legitimate leadership through descent from ancestor-gods and their human descendants. Since descent was cognatic, the living family members could change these genealogies as the *hapuu* membership shifted, due to the overlap nature of its membership and the movement of people. This would change the structure of the *hapuu* in terms of living and ancestral members. Through this restructuring leadership could also change. As the *hapuu* structure changed the ancestors were believed to participate and remain loyal to the reconstituted *hapuu*, even if it meant the ancestor had lost their position in the *hapuu*. If an ancestor position became vacant due to this change than another could be found from the expansive genealogy of the cognatic descent (ibid).

This restructuring of descent is still seen in contemporary times. Shifting the emphasis among certain ancestral lines of descent allows for the ideal distribution of land and political authority to reflect the actual shifts in power and numbers over time among the various descent lines within the *hapuu*. (ibid).

Another aspect of Maori life was the *moko*. This was a form of tattoo applied to the face and lower torso of a man. The tattooing represented a long and painful event in the life of a man. It involved a lot of blood loss and a high risk of infection. As such it

was a ritualized event, giving a man status and honour. Maori men believed that without a complete *moko* they were not complete persons. Each *moko* was unique as it was a form of identity for the individual (King 1975).

There was a relationship between a *moko* and the *kowhaiwhai*; which are the rafter patterns still found inside the existing meetinghouses of today. These rafters are regarded as symbols of descent lines from tribal ancestors, they are analogized to the “ribs” of the tribe and it is thought that they reflected the *moko* patterns of ancestors. In this sense the *moko* pattern could be modelled after ancestral designs, and worn as a badge of their *whakapapa*. The *moko* pattern consisted of various aspects. The patterns on each cheek were lineage designs so that each cheek represented descent from the paternal and maternal sides, reflecting the *hapuu* social structure. Beyond lineage identity the *moko* also expressed the man’s achievements in battle. These successes were shown on the forehead. Thus the *moko* was also a sign of masculinity, not only for war achievements, but also because of the ritual involved in getting a *moko* (ibid).

It was believed that the connection with war was the main reason the *mokos* were stopped with the end of the wars in the 1860s. There were other factors as well, slaves began to be tattooed for sale and the missionaries rejected the “heathenish practice” (ibid). As mentioned above the Native Land Court was also established at this time, effectively disintegrating the *hapuu* social structure, which would have been the basis for the patterns of the *moko*. In modern times Maori men are reviving the *moko* tradition. Although the meanings of many patterns are lost, new ones are being established. Perhaps the resurgence of the *moko* will help the *hapuu* social structure find a place in Maori society once again.

KURDISTAN

Generally, for people of Southwest Asia, family is the most fundamental and important feature of their social structure. They live with their extended patrilineal family, which is not only patrilocal but patriarchal as well. The elderly male has absolute rule and power in the family. One of the most significant traits of these people is the pride they express in their descent. Genealogies are traced back to their tribal affiliations and beyond that to a progenitor for the particular lineage. "This tribal pedigree...can play a fundamental role in determining and justifying positions of traditional authority and political power" (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online; *Southwest Asian people*).

Kurdistan is a region spread across Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. There are two general castes in this Islamic society. The ruling caste is tribally organized and consists of the royal, noble lineages that exercise political and social influence over the people; the feudal lords who own and operate the farmland; and the soldier caste that is formed through lineage ties and obligation. These tribal militias often take over villages and allow their noble lords to claim the land by collecting taxes from the peasants.

The non-tribal peasant caste has no lineal organization or the time to be ready with guns and horses to defend their homes. The risk of losing their crops in a fight is too great for the peasants, so in an effort to remain peaceful, they surrender their land to the lineage militia and nobles who invade (Barth 1953:53-60).

A peasant (or labourer) may rise within his caste if he has access to capital in order to procure the necessary equipment to become a tenant farmer. However, this non-tribal tenant farmer can still be conquered by tribal framers and feudal lords (ibid:24). The tribal system, on the other hand, is rigid in its mobility, as membership to lineages is

set and cannot be altered. Marriage practices within the tribal system are endogamous and adoption into a lineage is not accepted (ibid:59). The only means of grouping two tribes together is "by demonstrating (or inventing) genealogical connection" (ibid:60). However, this is a difficult merger as the tribes are physically separated. As such, a tribal village maintains a closed lineage.

If a Kurd were to leave his tribal lands, he would not be able to obtain political power at his new residence, as he would have no lineage or prestige there. This causes people to stay within their lineage and makes the system rigid and susceptible to collapse in situations of conquest and external administration (ibid). Those men who must leave their village due to a feud or scandal often join the private police force of their local feudal lord, thus securing protection and a place in society (ibid:65).

Along with the tribal and non-tribal castes, there is also a strong religious sect in Kurdistan. *Dervishes*, or religious brotherhoods, are hierarchical and the attainment of power is an important goal. These groups are lead by a holy man, a *Shaikh*, who has his position by virtue of being a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed (ibid:83). These holy men are believed to "embody a variable degree of unseen good power" (ibid:89). However, this sacred position does not necessarily affect the social status of the individual, which can range from a landless labourer to a feudal lord. *Shaikhs* are not found in tribal groups. Considering that their position is based on their descent from the Prophet, if a *Shaikh* did belong to a tribe, then his entire lineage would be able to claim such descent, and his elevated status in society would be lost (ibid:89).

As the *Shaikhs* are non-tribal, so to is the membership of the *dervish*, which is made up of non-tribal labourers and tenant farmers, people who cannot gain power within

the political sphere. A *Shaikh* has the ability to do amazing things and is thought to possess sacred power. Although this power is believed to be inherited through descendents of the Prophet, the strength of the power varies between the lineages and over time so that a lineage may gain or lose power as the next *Shaikh* takes leadership (ibid:85). The *Shaikh* has the ability to pass on mystic powers to those followers he deems are worthy. For the common farmer, this power represents a rise in his status. However, membership to these groups is also a mark of their low caste position in the larger society (ibid:88). Frederik Barth concluded “that membership in the brotherhood offers subjective satisfaction, giving the underprivileged person a field in which he feels that he too can manipulate and control power” (ibid:89).

Only the ruling class, as members of a tribe, along with the *Shaikh* holy men, keep a record of their genealogy. Their claim to a lineage or descent from the Prophet affords them status and power within the society. Genealogy is important here because it legitimizes the individual’s and their family’s status. “One of the tests of nobility is said to be the ability to name one’s patrilineal forebears to seven generations, and no one... outside of these families is able to perform this feat” (Masters 1953:180).

KOREA

Korea has a very long and well-documented patrilineal clan system. Clan identity is made clear through a person’s names. If there is any question there is also a registered genealogy book kept by the clan that extends back twenty or thirty generations. “By the sound of the given name, one can tell how many generations a person is from the common ancestor of the clan to which he belongs” (Lee 1936:48).

The social structure is exogamous so that by having a clear understanding of which clan a person belongs to there is no chance one will marry within his or her own clan. Class distinction is also important and causes one to be well acquainted with their genealogy. For example, the upper class *Yangban* can only associate with each other and they must marry another *Yangban* from a different clan. The same holds for the people of the lower-ranked classes. Thus not only are the classes preserved, but the clan system as well (ibid:49).

The genealogy book for the clan, called the *chok-bo*, has no official legal recognition, however it is an important symbol for *Yangban* status. Each *Yangban* household has to keep a copy of its official census registration, which is used to make the family exempt from taxes and military or labour service (Biernatzki 1967:19). William Biernatzki tells several stories where the government burned the *Yangban* book of the family; thus losing their tax and labour free status (ibid:203,453). Not only is status lost when there is no genealogy, but ancestor ceremonies are also stopped. However, in many cases a new unofficial genealogy is recorded and so annual rites again recognize recent ancestors, even though social status has been lost (ibid:203).

In the last century this concept of class separation has changed and in turn the clan system is disappearing (Lee 1936:49). However, with this breakdown of the class system a black market formed in the offices of nobility, as forged inscriptions in *Yangban* genealogy books are done to increase a person's chance of upward status mobility (Biernatzki 1967:19).

The genealogy book must be updated in a new printed edition about every thirty years, which roughly coincides with each new generation. A genealogy book is usually

composed of various sections. There is an historical part, which consists of gravesite maps and (in modern times) photographs of the lineage founder. There are introductions from the previous versions and other historical material, such as the generational names a person is allowed to use. Finally, there are the actual genealogy lists (ibid:218-219).

One curiosity of the genealogy books is that they are written in Chinese, instead of the modern Korean alphabet. In order to continue the family history the younger generation must have a good knowledge of Chinese. This is the prime motivation to establish village schools where Chinese is used; as the public schools in their attempt to be contemporary, tend to de-emphasize the Chinese language. Some people have translated the historical parts of the genealogy book into Korean so that the children can read it (ibid:222-223).

EUROPE and NORTH AMERICA

The Middle English term, *genealogie*, stems from the root word *gene-*, meaning to give birth, with reference to familial and tribal groups. The word stems from the Latin word *gens* meaning race or clan. However, the equivalent Greek word *genos*, also meaning race and family, is the more direct root for the word genealogy (Morris 1982). Both words: *gens* and *genos* come from the common Aryan root *gan*, which means to beget; and they are both “used specifically to denote the form of kinship organization which prides itself on its common descent” (Engels 1972:148).

David Dumville, through a study of historical and anthropological evidence, concluded, “that genealogies are a key ideological component of most cultures. They provide justification for current social arrangements by asserting claims about the past”

(Dumville in Erben 1991:281-2). Michael Erben, noting that genealogies can be altered to fit the needs of the society, in particular, to establish leadership and social continuity, echoes several common themes in the literature, namely the plasticity of genealogy and its relationship to social power (1991:287).

Thus Michel Foucault, to take a recent example, holds that genealogy is a form of historical discourse that establishes and legitimizes power relationships in a society.

[F]rom Roman times until at least the Middle Ages, the function of history was to manifest the legitimacy and splendour of power. Tales of the antiquity of kingdoms, resuscitating great ancestors and rediscovering the exploits of heroes who founded empires or dynasties established the unbroken continuity of the sovereign with these heroic forebears, providing a guarantee of the legitimacy of the crown. (Foucault in Levy 1998:160).

Foucault argues that a main characteristic of this discourse is to establish one legitimate claim to power in a society. Complex mythologies were constructed so that clear lines of divine descent could be asserted, thereby legitimizing the position of not only the king but of the noble families as well (ibid).

For example, Saxon rulers of the English kingdoms were all descended from the god Woden (Dumville 1977:77). Legal claim to the throne did not necessarily have to be divine, although a clear genealogy was needed to secure one's regal status. "Early Germanic law-codes suggest that churchmen felt king-lists and royal genealogies to be important mirrors of a king's right to rule" (ibid:75). During the inauguration of King Alexander III of Scotland in 1249 his genealogy was read, going back to the fifth century. This announcement of legal title through descent not only affirmed the King's position

but it also reminded him of the deeds done by his ancestors, and that he should emulate them (ibid:73).

As Foucault pointed out, power is relational and process-oriented. Power is not an abstract property or force of nature; rather it can only be exercised within the context that it was created. Thus this means that power is never one sided, there will always be resistance where there is power (Foucault in Levy 1998:167).

The notion that knowledge, like power, is a struggle (ibid:169) implies that truth is indexical, and that historical discourse is constituted. Genealogies then are inherently constituted and interpreted according to the needs of the person recording the lineage. Dumville argues that pedigrees including the god Woden should not be taken literally. Rather his inclusion should be interpreted as a declaration of the group's membership in the Anglian world. Similar, King Alexander's lineage, taken as a legal document to his right to rule, "might therefore be expected to embody legal fictions or conventions" (Dumville 1977:77). Through these pedigrees political links are established and the right to rule is affirmed. In this sense, genealogies can have a propagandist function. "Genealogy allowed the ruling dynasties to present the past (and, by implication, the future) in terms of their own history; such total exclusion of other lines was a powerful propaganda weapon" (ibid:83).

The court poets and genealogists of Medieval Ireland, known as the *ollavs*, "were needed to uphold the claims and preserve the rights of the nobility of Ireland" (Williams in Erben 1991:287). Through selected memory and adjustments the *ollavs* could alter the poems and genealogies to the benefit of their patrons. An *ollav* poem from 1260 addresses the issue of the possible loss of the *ollav*.

Should poetry be suppressed, men;...none will be heard of
 ...Should the historic lore of the children of Conn, and thy
 poems, Donal, be suppressed – then would the children of
 your dog-keepers be equally servile with the children of
 your nobility (Erben 1991:288).

This poem illustrates the general influence and legitimatising power of court genealogists, not to mention the relationship between genealogy and social class. Those in this position in society had the power to legitimize the claim of their lord to the throne by reciting a continuous pedigree of the king back to divine origins. “Their history was believed because it was too original and authentic to allow for doubt” (ibid).

Genealogy is closely linked to oral traditions, where written records were non-existent and human memory alone had to be relied upon for the tracking of ancestors and relatives. Oral cultures around the world used this form of kinship reckoning until European contact was established, and many continue to use it alongside written forms of recording status. However, for Medieval Europe and even in modern Western society, genealogy is in the middle of oral and written traditions. Although recorded in writing, these genealogies are based on oral reckonings of past events. As mentioned above, Evans-Pritchard noted that human memory is limited and current genealogies of oral cultures serve the social and political groupings of the time. Lineages are merged into one person for ease and some are omitted for political reasons. “This ‘structural amnesia’ is common in genealogies” (Dumville 1977:87).

Following the invention of alphabetic writing in the Middle East, the Greeks and Romans began to record genealogies in poems and historical accounts. However, genealogy was not the empirical research it is today, as the writers of the time only casually mentioned the lineages as part of their narrative or because they were concerned

with the family relationships of their gods (Encyclopaedia Britannia Online: *History of genealogical study*).

As Christianity spread in the Sixth century, the genealogies of European royal families began to be recorded. In what is now the United Kingdom, this tradition started with the monks who wrote down the oral pedigrees of their monarch (ibid). This is not to say that genealogies of common people were not recognized, only that it was the royal pedigrees that were recorded (Dumville 1977:95). English royal lineages can be traced back to the Sixth century and in Ireland the royal pedigrees generally go back to the Fifth century, some even extending into the Third century. In Wales, the noble families are traced back a millennium. The Anglo-Saxons also had such genealogies, but these were lost during the Norman Conquest (Encyclopaedia Britannia Online: *History of genealogical study*).

A common tendency of the monks who were recording the genealogies was to try to link the lineage to the Scriptures. For example, the kings of Wessex were traced back to Scaef, son of Noah. This habit originated in the Old Testament where the object was to show descent from Adam, Noah and Abraham. This coincides with Foucault's ideas on clear lines of divine descent because "by the time these genealogies had become part of the Jewish scriptures, the concept of racial purity had reinforced the keeping of family records" (ibid). It was important to make the lines of descent clear and common for all.

As mentioned above, in the era between the Norman Conquest and about 1500, genealogies were recorded and recited for royal and noble lineages by the court genealogist and poet. These court officials could be found across Europe and all held the power to legitimize the nobles' place in society (Erben 1991:288).

In Medieval England, genealogies had a key function of providing information to record land deeds, taxation and lawsuits. This period also saw the emergence of recorded lineages among the common people, not just the nobility. Villeinage started to replace serfdom. In this system, the villein, a feudal serf, had to work for his landlord for a set number of days in the year and could not move from the estate without the lord's approval. A man had strong incentive to prove that he was not a villein and this was done through lineage records (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online; *History of genealogical study*).

Feudalism also made status and inheritance dependent upon lineage claims where "indisputable genealogies became a prerequisite for numerous successful law suits" (Erben 1991:282). Pedigrees and genealogical details formed the basis for interaction and social status in the feudal system to the extent that "land before 1200 was not in a sense property at all – it was *personal* relationships" (Palmer in Erben 1991:283).

From approximately 1500, European genealogy began to take on the style and purpose it still has today. With the waning of the Middle Ages, genealogies became more inclusive and new classes of people emerged. In England, a new middle class began to surface consisting of the mercantile elite of the towns. The mercantile gained influence and power and formed a new group of nobility and gentry. Other factors also lead to the detailed record keeping of lineages. With the rise of Protestantism, there was a new emphasis on individual religion in connection with the emphasis on individual works and personal salvation. As well, the royalty of the Renaissance period needed to have exact information on their subjects.

The English historian and antiquary, William Camden (1551-1623), set the standards of genealogical research. He did a lot of work on surnames as well as writing *Britannia*, a topographical survey of England (Encyclopaedia Britannia Online: *History of genealogical study*).

The European settlers of the New World often held the subject of genealogy in contempt. In their homelands of Europe, genealogy had been used to secure nobles' rights to govern and at the same time ensured the social immobility of the commoners. It was these commoners who escaped to the New World, where society focused on a civic polity instead of a kinship one and as such social mobility was not determined by one's lineage. The success of the American Revolution contributed to the rejection of genealogy. Abraham Lincoln, to take one example, was claimed to have been "more interested in what the grandson would become than what his grandfather's position had been" (Bidlack 1983:9).

Genealogy took on a new purpose in the 1800s in America. The Mormons of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, formed in 1830, subscribe to the doctrine that past family members, who lived before the formation of the Church, can still be baptized into the faith. This will ensure that all past family members will receive salvation and the family will be together after death (Mayfield 1983:125-6). This fundamental desire to ensure the salvation of past relatives encourages believers to research their genealogies. In 1894, the Mormons set up the Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City, Utah (ibid:112). Since that time they have become the keepers of the largest collection of genealogical material in the world. Whether Mormon or not, nearly all modern day genealogists will use a LDS Centre (which are local Church of Latter Day

Saints Genealogical Resource Centres, found across North America) at some point in their search for their family roots.

The 1800s also saw a revolution in genealogical practice in the Western world with the application of historical and literary studies - in other words the addition of narrative interest - as a compliment to the pedigree charts (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: *History of genealogical study*). Modern genealogies are still comprised of pedigree charts, but they also typically include the family history; that is, the life stories of the ancestors listed in the lineage. These stories are often of struggles in life, occupational choices and other major life events. These stories are usually found in the written form of legal documents, such as land deeds or wills or in private papers, such as letters and diaries. Of course stories are still passed down orally through generations; however, oral stories often get distorted. As Foucault argued, knowledge is a struggle and most people like to put the best possible spin on a family tale, so over the generations stories get altered from their original form.

Many genealogists rely on national historical information to give their family history social context and to help explain events. However, national historical records also benefit from and can be corrected by genealogical data. Family histories add depth and real life stories to world events, making the events more relevant to people.

The current era of genealogy maintains leisure activity characteristics, as people in contemporary society do not need to know their lineage for land deeds or tax purposes. A person's lineage no longer determines whether they are qualified for a job or eligible to marry into a certain social class. Genealogy in the Western world is done for pleasure and curiosity as it answers personal questions of self and cultural identity.

However, the Western world still values some aspects of kinship polity, such as royal families and in North America there are certain elitist clubs and societies where descent still matters. There are several such societies that do research in genealogy, for example, the DAR in the United States or the United Empire Loyalist Society in Canada. These societies only allow people to join if they can prove one of their ancestors fought for either the Americans or the English, respectively, in the American Revolution. There are also countless family-name societies where membership is granted if prospective members can prove they are descendants of the one common ancestor. There are many genealogists today who pursue their family history for the sole reason of proving their descent in order to become a member of one of these societies. Generally, nothing of intrinsic social value is obtained from membership; however, as mentioned above, in the American original colonies, membership to the DAR may facilitate acceptance into certain colleges or occupations.

SUMMARY

Through the ages and across cultures genealogy has remained the record of descent lines, whether the record is in the memory of the people or if it is written down. One factor common to all genealogies is that they are records that have been constituted by the society. As such, genealogies can change to fit the needs of the living people: whether for social, political or economic reasons. Even when careful records of descent have been written down and preserved, as in Korea, the lineages can still be altered and forged. For the Maori this change is not only allowed but is expected.

Another common factor, but not to all, is that genealogies are lineage records for the high castes of society. They are a record of the leader's legitimate claim to power through his or her descent from divine ancestors. Not only do genealogies clarify who is to be in power but they are also the basis for social interaction. Many cultures around the world are either strictly exogamous or endogamous and so it is necessary to know whom one cannot marry, and this knowledge is in the genealogical record of the people. In this fashion, genealogies also provide the basis for class distinctions, so that a person does not interact with, let alone marry, someone who is not a member of their class. Here, genealogies also create alliances, as marriage, determined by lineage membership, group tribes or clans together.

Genealogy in the Western world has its roots in characteristics mentioned above, but today it is an activity of popular culture. It no longer has ties to class distinction and claims to power, but is now considered a leisure activity done to feed curiosity and answer personal questions of identity. Of course, genealogy is still constituted by those who record it, even with the current *high standards* for what is considered *true* evidence. Genealogy will always be part fact and part imagination.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORIES ON COMMITMENT AND SERIOUS LEISURE

In this chapter I will explore theories on commitment and leisure activities as they relate to the pursuit of popular genealogy. These theories will help to explain what genealogy can mean to people who practice it, along with how this endeavour affects other aspects of their life in terms of their self-identity, their view of the world and the impact it has on their daily activities and family life.

Thomas Buchanan and Boas Shamir's theories on commitment in leisure activities will be noted, as they relate to an important dimension of this work, namely the dedication and even passion that comes across when one interviews strongly committed genealogists. In a similar vein, the work of Robert Stebbins on serious leisure activities will be used as a framework to explore the meaning and impact genealogy has for many of the subjects of this study.

LEISURE and COMMITMENT

The pursuit of genealogy is considered to be a leisure activity in the general sense of a hobby (Stebbins 2001:123). However, beyond those who have become professional genealogists, amateurs as well can be strongly committed to this leisure activity. Personal and social obligations develop as a person becomes more involved in the search for family history information.

Thomas Buchanan

Dr. Thomas Buchanan has done extensive research into various aspects of recreational behaviour. He has studied individual interactions of those in recreation

activities, conflicts in recreation and social groups and the meanings of outdoor recreation activities. Buchanan has also done a specific study on the attitudes of fishermen. He is currently a faculty member of the Department of Geography and Recreation at the University of Wyoming.

Buchanan has defined commitment “as the pledging or binding of an individual to behavioural acts which result in some degree of affective attachment to the behaviour or to the role associated with the behaviour and which produce side bets as a result of that behaviour” (1985:402). He refers to “side bets” as the other interests and consequences involved in the continuation of a specific behaviour. Side bets can include the investment of time and money in the behaviour or the development of friends through the mutual interest in an activity. The social-role component of side bets can also cause a person’s self-identity to change, as people present an image of themselves to others that they feel they must then live up to (ibid:404).

Buchanan theorizes there are three major components of committed behaviour. First, “commitment requires consistent or focused behaviour and implies a rejection of alternative behaviours” (ibid:403). The focus on a particular activity results in the person becoming more committed, as promises must be kept and sacrifices are made when participation decreases in other activities. This notion stems from Roseabeth Kanter’s cognitive consistency theory, which “suggests that, as the opportunity cost of participation in an activity increases, so too will the perceived value of that activity” (ibid:405). The success of a particular activity is important when an investment of time and money is made.

The second major component of committed behaviour is that “commitment is a function of ‘side bets’” (ibid:403). No single side bet may be important enough for the person to continue the activity, however, a series of side bets can be valued enough that the activity is maintained.

The third component states that “commitment involves some degree of affective attachment to the goals and values of a role, an activity, or an organization” (ibid:405). The degree of this attachment varies depending on the level of commitment. Buchanan describes three general categories for the degree of affective attachment. The lowest degree is referred to as continuance as it is defined as “the continuation of a particular behaviour because the cost of terminating the behaviour is greater than the cost of maintaining the behaviour” (ibid). In this situation there is often no readily available alternative to the behaviour, so although there may not be a strong attachment to the activity, it is better than no activity at all.

The second level of affective attachment is cohesion and here the individual will be committed to group solidarity and the friendships that developed through the common interest in the activity. The value of the activity is in the social interaction gained through participation as the person has a sense of belonging to a group (ibid).

The highest level of attachment is control. The participant at this level is dedicated and accepts “the norms, values, and inner convictions of the principal actors within a social network” (ibid:407). They also feel that the norms are right and a part of their self-identity, thus they are adhered to out of a sense of moral obligation.

The initial participation in an activity may be spontaneous, however, over time side bets are generated as resources are invested, friendships develop with others and

one's self-identity is altered to fit the new attachment to the activity. These, combined with regular participation in the activity, lead to one being committed to the activity. This notion sees commitment not as a trait phenomenon, but rather tied to an individual's self-identity as they behave in a manner which is consistent "with how they view themselves and how they would like to be viewed by others" (ibid).

Hobson Bryan has developed the notion of recreation specialization that sees individuals proceeding through a developmental stage as they become more involved in a particular activity. He suggests that they are in a "career" in their activity that "is reflected in the changing pattern of skills, attitudes, and desired experiences that result from varying degrees of participation" (Bryan in Buchanan 1985:408). The equipment a person owns, the amount of participation s/he does and the skills s/he has for performing the activity determines her or his level of specialization. However, Buchanan points out that if only these observable characteristics are taken into account when determining commitment to an activity, then the affective attachment one may have towards the activity is not measured. The importance of social cohesion and role-identity play an important part in one's sense of commitment to an activity (Buchanan 1985:410).

Buchanan speaks about leisure social worlds representing a "loosely organized social organization that frequently lack a definable geographic location or physical presence" (ibid). In the case of genealogists, this is not applicable. I will show in this thesis that genealogists do have a defined geographic location where they can get together on a regular basis to share experiences and offer and receive guidance in their search for family history information.

Buchanan argues that the more committed a person is to their chosen activity, the less likely they are to find substitutes for that activity. They are also more likely to change resources than to change activities, so that they may invest more time or money and even travel to continue their activity than stop it all together.

There are a few means to measure a person's commitment. One is to look at the amount of participation the person does in the activity compared to other activities in her or his life and how many years s/he has been doing the activity. Another gauge of commitment is to measure the importance of the activity in the person's life in terms of her or his social relations developed through the activity, the importance the activity has in comparison with other activities, and the participant's resistance to change. Finally, the amount of side bets developed from the activity is another indication of the commitment a person has to that activity. These may include equipment owned, organizational memberships, money invested, and the amount of training and travel done for the activity. Buchanan feels that "in combination they appear to tap in the main attributes of committed behaviour" (ibid:414).

Boas Shamir

Dr. Boas Shamir, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has done research into various issues relating to unemployment and non-work activities. He has looked at self-esteem and the psychological impact of unemployment as well as the relationship between work and leisure. In the years leading to his paper on commitment and leisure, Shamir researched values surrounding work at home and non-work careers. Citing Robert Stebbins' work on serious leisure, Shamir argues that, "the concept of commitment is

potentially useful for descriptive and explanatory frameworks of leisure behaviour” (1988:238). His ideas on commitment and leisure speak to some issues and values relating to the pursuit of genealogy.

Shamir points out that the concepts of commitment and leisure are not easily reconciled. The term commitment implies a sense of obligation, restriction of freedom and restraint where the concept of leisure focuses on freedom, spontaneity and self-expression (ibid:239). He uses Kenneth Roberts’ definition of leisure as “a relatively self-determined non-work activity” (Roberts in Shamir 1988:240). Shamir also warns against equating consistent behaviour with commitment. He states that a person can frequently partake in an activity simply because they enjoy it, which is no indication of the person’s commitment to that activity. However, a pattern of behaviour may develop into commitment (Shamir 1988:241).

Shamir suggests that there are two categories of commitment, one is external and the other is internal. “External commitment exists when the individual is obliged by the conditions in which he or she is situated to continue a line of action, a role performance, or a relationship” (ibid:242). Shamir sees two main types of this form of commitment: material and social. Similar to Buchanan’s notion of side bets, the investment of money and social relationships strengthen a person’s commitment to an activity. Shamir does not feel that this form of commitment is relevant for most leisure activities. However, serious leisure activities frequently require an investment of money and social groups often form around their common interest. Commitment is thus developed through expectations and obligations group members have to each other (ibid:243).

Internal commitment, according to Shamir, “is essentially a motivational state...to continue a line of activity, a role performance, or a relationship and to invest in them regardless of the balance of external costs and benefits” (ibid:244). A person is motivated to participate in the activity because it allows for the attainment of her or his personal goals and values. As Buchanan noted, Shamir also believes that the chosen activity, role performance and development of relationships impact the participant’s self-identity. The more central these aspects are to the person’s life the more committed they will become to the activity.

Shamir adds that there must also be positive experiences and feelings associated with the activity and the person’s commitment to it in order to become a valued part of one’s self-identity (ibid). John Kelly has shown “that people use the leisure sphere for trying on new role-identities, receiving feedback, correcting their performances, and eventually incorporating them into their self-identities” (Kelly in Shamir 1988:247).

Shamir states that when something is done for pure fun there is no need for the concept of commitment. Although Stebbins stated in 1982 that serious leisure is no fun, ten years later, he added pure fun as an aspect of serious leisure (1992:7). Shamir also believes that through a continuously satisfying activity commitment may develop, and “satisfaction derived from successful self-presentation in a leisure role may lead to greater identification with the role and hence to commitment” (Shamir 1988:248).

Shamir theorizes that internal commitment can then lead to an external commitment, where the person is now expected to act and behave in a public sphere (1988:245). However, the two forms of commitment differ, external commitment leads to an obligation in behaviour and can be characterized as resisting change. In this sense

Shamir sees external commitment as being quasi-motivational, where internal commitment is fully motivational and can lead to an expansion of the level of investment in the activity (ibid:248), or side bets, as Buchanan calls them.

SERIOUS LEISURE

Since the mid-1970s, Dr. Robert Stebbins has conducted research on various aspects of amateurs in the entertainment, science and sports industries of North America. In search for a comprehensive definition of *amateur*, Stebbins has created his own. He expands the dictionary definition of amateurs, that they are “devotees who love a particular activity”, by using both a macro and a micro-sociological definition, that sees amateurs as they compare to their professional counterparts and how they are different from them (1992:10).

Stebbins’ work on amateurs, professionals and volunteers in activities often associated with leisure has been a valuable incite into these pursuits. Although he never mentioned genealogy as an example of serious leisure until a later work (2001), Stebbins has provided a framework from which aspects of popular genealogy can be studied.

Qualities

As genealogy is a leisure activity with a sense of commitment for many, it falls under the category of “serious leisure” as defined by Stebbins. According to Stebbins serious leisure is “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge” (1992:3). Serious

leisure is different from activities done in a casual manner, as the term *serious* implies the activity is more purposeful and directed.

Stebbins found six qualities that distinguish serious leisure from casual leisure, all of which speak to the notion of commitment, and apply to the work of a genealogist. The first is the need to persevere, to continue with the activity in the face of adversity. The second quality of serious leisure is the development of career or volunteer interests in their leisure activity. The third quality is tied to the second, where a career in the activity is pursued, knowledge and experience in the field also develops (ibid:6).

The fourth quality listed by Stebbins is a list of nine durable benefits found by amateurs, which are as follows: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, lasting physical products of the activity and finally self-gratification (pure fun).

The fifth quality is the tendency for subcultures to develop for the activity, where others doing the same thing will form a group (ibid:7). The last quality Stebbins mentions relates to the five preceding ones, in that “participants in serious leisure tend to *identify* strongly with their chosen pursuits” (ibid).

Amateurs

As mentioned in the definition of serious leisure, Stebbins believes that there are three forms of serious leisure: amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers. Stebbins’ macro-sociological definition of amateurs compares them to their professional counterparts as well as the public to whom they relate to or perform for; he refers to this as the professional – amateur – public (PAP) system. However, Stebbins also uses a micro-

sociological definition of amateurs stating that amateurs hold certain attitudes that are different from both professionals and the public (ibid:10).

Hobbyists

Stebbins defines a hobby as “a specialized pursuit beyond one’s occupation, a pursuit that one finds particularly interesting and enjoyable because of its durable benefits” (ibid). He says that a hobbyist is serious and committed to her or his pursuits but there is no sense of social necessity or a personal obligation to engage in the activity. Stebbins also talks about a hobbyist – public (HP) system, for the situation when a hobbyist has a commercial public. For example, this would apply to a hobbyist who sells her or his products to a local market. This also relates to businesses selling products for hobbies (ibid:11).

There are five different types of hobbyists according to Stebbins: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants, players (ibid:11-13) and liberal arts (1994). Stebbins categorizes non-professional genealogists as liberal arts hobbyists (2001:123). Liberal arts hobbyists actively seek out knowledge for its own sake. Their main goal is to acquire a broad base of knowledge so that they may fully understand the topic of interest. There is no practical application for this knowledge, acquiring it for its own sake is the only aim; although, liberal arts hobbyists do use their knowledge as they share what they know with others (1994:175). These hobbyists acquire their knowledge in an active manner rather than in a passive one, meaning that they seek out the knowledge they need, they do not simply sit back and wait for it to come to them.

Liberal arts hobbyists say that they are attracted to these interests because it develops their personalities, intellectual capacities and understanding of life (ibid:176).

This hobby is usually a life long pursuit of self-guided learning, mainly through reading. Although this type of hobby is done for personal growth and satisfaction, there is a need to externalise it in some way. This helps the hobbyist to maintain what s/he all ready knows and by sharing with others s/he may learn even more. This externalisation is usually done through talking to others in informal conversations (ibid:178).

Stebbins believes that liberal art hobbyists tend not have a social world of their own, like other forms of hobbies do. This does not mean that these people are not social, only that the means of acquiring knowledge is individualistic. These hobbyists only enter the social world to advance their interests, by taking non-credit courses on their topic (ibid:180). Stebbins sees these people as being reclusive. These hobbyists describe their work as peaceful or relaxing, done at the convenience of the person. As this is a mental hobby the person often finds the need “to get away from it all”, to think about all they have learned. These hobbyists can also be elitist, as some interests require financial means to acquire the information. However, there are public means to get this data, so this type of hobby can be pursued by anyone (ibid:181).

Stebbins' category of collector can also be applied to genealogy. A collector hobbyist is one who collects specific items. They must develop a technical knowledge of the circumstances in which the item is acquired, as well as developing a sophisticated appreciation of these items. With this comes a broad understanding of the item's historical and contemporary production and use. The motivation for collecting is generally not financial, but rather there are personal and social reasons that inspire the hobbyist to collect the item (1992:11). There is also more effort involved than in casual collecting, which Stebbins classifies as a pastime. Casual collecting of matchbooks or

travel pennants does not have the complexity “of commercial, social and physical circumstances about which to learn; no substantial aesthetic or technical appreciation possible; no comparable level of understanding as to production and use to be developed” (ibid:12).

The category of activity participant hobbyist involves physical movement but folk artists also fall under this category. Considering that there are not many professional genealogists, popular genealogy can be associated with folk artists as they too have little or no interchange with professionals or amateurs and so are not part of Stebbins’ amateur category. Hobbyist folk artists lie outside the PAP system (ibid).

The category of player hobbyist can also be applied to a degree to genealogy. This category usually refers to competition in sports where all participants “relate to each other according to a set of rules that structure their actions during a contest” (ibid:13). These hobbyists also do not have a true professional counterpart. However, their participation is consistent with the definition of a hobbyist as it is continual and systematic.

The hobbyist’s goal is to improve her or his knowledge and skill in the chosen activity. Their commitment to the hobby can result in tensions between the hobbyist and family members as issues of neglect, the lost of shared interests, friends, fatigue, neglect of work, the involvement in subcultures and the change in self-identity surface (Robbins and Joseph in Stebbins 1992:14).

SUMMARY

The notion of commitment in leisure activities is hard to reconcile as Shamir points out. Commitment implies a sense of obligation, where leisure is associated with freedom. However, there are clear scenarios where a person is committed to her or his leisure activity. Stebbins calls this dedication *serious leisure*.

The three theorists mentioned in this chapter, Buchanan, Shamir and Stebbins, all agree on some basic principles concerning what commitment means and how that applies to leisure activities. One principle Buchanan and Shamir hold is that there must be a sense of obligation, consistent behaviour and restriction of other activities for commitment to exist. Shamir adds that consistent behaviour does not equate into commitment, but that it can lead to it. They agree that a high investment of time, money and the development of friendships can also lead to commitment.

Another basic aspect of commitment is that it can change the participant's self-identity. Buchanan sees this change as the highest level of affective attachment to an activity, where the person feels in control of their participation as it fits with their own norms and values. Shamir feels that internal commitment as a motivational state can lead to change in self-identity, but only if there are positive experiences and feelings associated with the activity. Stebbins outlines durable benefits for serious leisure that involve self-improvement and social growth that can cause a change in self-identity.

Buchanan and Stebbins both mention the development of skills and knowledge as raising the level of commitment a person has to their chosen activity. Shamir and Stebbins feel that simple enjoyment is also required in a leisure activity if the person is to become committed to it.

Stebbins' notion of a liberal arts hobbyist best describes genealogy as it involves the collection of knowledge, develops and changes one's self-identity and understanding of life through the knowledge gained, and is done in an individualistic manner. There are certain aspects with Stebbins definition of a liberal arts hobbyist that do not apply to genealogy, and they will be explored throughout this thesis.

I will demonstrate that popular genealogy, excluding professionals, is a leisure activity and because of its nature and the dedication participants' exhibit towards it, genealogy involves commitment that can result in a change in one's self-identity and have an impact on her or his daily activities and family life. Popular genealogy can certainly be considered a serious leisure activity.

CHAPTER FOUR**METHODOLOGY**

The methods used for conducting my research into the lives of genealogists will be reviewed in this chapter. The purpose of using these methods, the strengths and weaknesses of each, and changes made in the course of the study will be explored. I will also explain my recruiting methods and questions asked of subjects.

My purpose in this research was, essentially, to find out, who, in a community like Calgary – which at present consists overwhelmingly of people who have moved here from elsewhere (as opposed to being rooted here for generations) – engages in genealogical work and considers themselves genealogists, and to investigate the world view and social life of these genealogists, using (in many cases) the same questions which have been used in research on genealogists elsewhere in North America, so that it would be possible to compare results at the end.

Interviews and the questionnaire conducted for this thesis mainly stayed within the city of Calgary and surrounding area. Calgary has a diverse population that provided a good cross-section of people in terms of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Two genealogists from Edmonton were also interviewed.

Three methods were used in this study. The main source of information was interviews with thirty-three self-defined genealogists, to whom I will refer to as *informants* for the duration of the thesis. Questions in these interviews provided information on a variety of factors from life histories to the inspirations genealogists said they had for starting and continuing to pursue genealogy.

The second source of information was a Calgary wide mail-out survey. Five hundred surveys were sent out to random people around the city asking basic questions

on whether they pursue their family history or not, and what they know about the subject. Those who completed and returned the survey are referred to as *respondents* throughout this thesis. The purpose of the survey was to assess the incidence of genealogy within Calgary.

The third source of information was supplied by a study of the resources available to genealogists in Calgary. Questions were asked of Librarians and Archivists in various institutions about the genealogical services they offer and who uses them. An internet survey was also conducted to see what resources are available on line as well to analyse the web pages of the local institutions visited. This study on genealogical resources helped to establish the popularity and ease of practicing genealogy in Calgary.

INTERVIEWS

Thirty interviews were conducted in the summer of 2001. Four of the interviews were with couples in which both spouses pursue genealogy and one interview was with the children of a genealogist, making a total of thirty-five informants. Eight of these informants consider themselves to be novices, as they have only been practicing genealogy for less than two years. Four of the informants are professional genealogists, in that they conduct genealogical research for paying clients. The remainder of the informants refer to themselves as experienced genealogists, as they have been pursuing their family history for at least two years, and many have been researching their roots since they were adolescents.

Recruiting

All the informants were volunteers. I conducted a beginner course in genealogy at the Glenbow Museum in the winter of 2001 and at the end of the course I asked for volunteers for my research. Four neophyte genealogists were interviewed.

A request for informants was put on the electronic mailing list for the Alberta Family Histories Society (AFHS), called Dist-Gen. This led to an overwhelming and immediate response of many people willing to be interviewed. Eighteen genealogists were interviewed; three of these were not members of the AFHS but did subscribe to Dist-Gen. A few professional genealogists were contacted through their advertisements in the AFHS quarterly magazine for interviews and two volunteered. Hearing of my research by word of mouth, two sisters volunteered to be interviewed to discuss their father's genealogical work and how it affected them.

Three referrals came from informants and a fellow anthropology student. One referral was a couple in which both spouses practice genealogy, and another was a man living in Edmonton. These informants do not belong to a family history society (FHS), nor do they use computers for their genealogy work. Both of these characteristics were unusual among the genealogists interviewed. The third referral was a professional genealogist, also from Edmonton. He was interviewed for his unique perspective on genealogy and because there are not many full time professionals in the field.

Finally, a few more genealogists who do not use a computer for their genealogy work were needed. Most genealogists use computers today, however, there are some who do not, and I wanted to make sure they were represented in my sample. An

announcement was made at an AFHS meeting asking for such people to volunteer.

Two people came forward in response to this announcement.

Interview Locations

Most of the interviews (twenty-four of them) were held at the informants' homes. This allowed the research to include observations about genealogical material and family heirlooms displayed in the home, how family history information was organized, and whether or not a room in the house was set up and reserved for their work.

Two of the interviews were done through email. One of the interviews was the professional based in Edmonton and the other had no time for a lengthy interview. The fellow anthropology student interviewed the other Edmonton informant, as he was her father. She was given a list of questions that she asked of him and she taped the interview. The last three interviews were held in downtown Calgary for the convenience of the informants.

Focus Groups

My initial intention was to have three focus groups of five individuals each for a discussion about genealogy. There was to be one focus group of professional genealogists, another with family members of a genealogist and a third group of non-genealogists. I discovered that it was difficult to get people to commit to an interview where I was coming to them, let alone to try to get them all to come to one location at a set time, as such the focus groups were not possible.

Instead, a total of four professional genealogists were interviewed on separate occasions. Family members of the informants were interviewed at the time of the informants' interviews. This was not ideal as the informant was usually present during

this interview, so a frank and honest discussion was not always possible. However, some apparently candid comments were expressed from the family about the work of the genealogist, but at the same time it can be assumed that ideal conditions for candid comments were not achieved because of the presence of the genealogist. Fortunately, the two sisters whose father does genealogy were interviewed alone. This discussion was more in-depth than the other conversations with family members as it lasted longer and the women were able to speak freely. A total of eight family members of genealogists were interviewed.

The last focus group was to be composed of non-genealogists. Short of stopping people on the street, persons in this category proved nearly impossible to find. The Calgary wide mail-out survey gave respondents the opportunity to give their name and number for a follow-up discussion on the topic of genealogy. Although 45 percent of the respondents left their name and number, of these there was none who claimed *no* interest in genealogy. They were either genealogists or had “some” interest in their family history. Five respondents were selected who had only a slight interest in their family history and were interviewed over the phone. Two of them stated that their interest was piqued by my survey.

Fortunately, an informant was found through word of mouth that has absolutely no interest in genealogy and finds it quite boring when her friends talk about it. She has supplied valuable insight into why a person would not have any interest in knowing about their family’s past.

Questions

The interviews began with the reading and signing of an *Initial Consent Form* (see Appendix A). The questions started with recording the person's life history: where they were born, whether they had moved around and where they attended school, as well as any post-secondary schooling they had received. They were then asked when and why they started genealogy. The next set of questions were concerned with how they did their research, and how dedicated they were to its pursuit in terms of time, money, consistency, and social behaviour. The genealogists were also asked about how genealogy has impacted their daily activities, their family and their view of life. See Appendix B for the complete list of questions asked.

The information gathered from the informants was extensive and personal. Anecdotal information beyond basic statistics was gathered in a sympathetic manner so that the genealogists' views were used to establish general tendencies and ideas.

Each interview ended with a *Closing Consent Form* (see Appendix A) that allowed the informant to have information given during the interview excluded from the thesis. This form also gave the informants the opportunity to change their mind about their anonymity. The consent forms appear to have made the informants feel at ease about revealing personal information during the interview and the closing consent form was well received, as a means of omitting statements they did not want made public.

As a fellow genealogist, I was able to understand what the informants were telling me about how genealogy has affected their lives. I could relate to the stories shared, and knew the archives mentioned and the language used. By sharing my own genealogical

experiences this facilitated understanding and what appeared to be more open and honest discussion about their role as a genealogist.

MAIL-OUT SURVEY

A random survey was sent out to 500 homes within the city of Calgary. A response rate of 5 to 10 percent was expected on the basis of the conventional wisdom in the survey literature. The goal was to have 100 returned, so 500 were sent out initially and more would be sent if 100 were not returned. The response rate was higher than expected, 28 percent (or 140) of the surveys were returned from the initial 500, so there was no need to send out more surveys.

Address List

Addresses for the survey were selected from the 2001 Calgary phone book. The phone book provided an excellent distribution list of names for the city. In this volume, there were approximately 1250 pages of names and addresses so every second or third page was used to select an address. This ensured that the names were evenly distributed across the alphabet. In order to have an equal number of addresses from the four quadrants of Calgary, addresses were chosen in order of the quadrants and the cycle was repeated until all 500 names and addresses were selected. The process of selection involved scanning through every second or third page starting at a random spot on the page looking for an address with the required city quadrant. The last step in this process involved going to the Canada Post web page to get the postal codes for the addresses, as they were not listed in the phone book.

It was thought that there would be a better response rate if the surveys were addressed to a person rather than to “the resident” of the address.

Survey

The survey was accompanied by a cover letter explaining its purpose, and its place in a graduate research project. The cover letter also included the office phone numbers of the thesis supervisor and myself, should the respondent have any questions or concerns about the survey. This letter was printed on letterhead from the Department of Anthropology and departmental return address envelopes were included. On the back of the cover letter was a letter written by the thesis supervisor stating that I was in fact a graduate student from the University of Calgary and that this project was a legitimate scientific research project and had been approved by a committee of professors at the university.

At the time of sending the survey out there was an international terrorism scare involving biochemical poisons. The media reported regularly on envelopes containing Anthrax found in the mail system. People were very apprehensive about opening unfamiliar letters. Using the official University of Calgary return address on the envelope probably saved a lot of the surveys from being tossed into the garbage, unopened.

Questions

The survey itself was only one page and started with of six demographic questions, asking recipients for their postal code, age, gender, household structure and occupation. There were also five questions about family history. The word *genealogy* was avoided to prevent alienating anyone if they did not know the meaning of that term.

The survey asked if they had ever done research into their family history and if so, for how long. If the respondent did not do any research, they were asked if they had an interest in the topic and if so, to explain why they did not do any research. They were then asked to list places they would go to learn how to do research into their family history. The last question asked the respondent if they would be willing to talk about this subject some more to give their name and number. See Appendix C for the survey.

Problems

In hindsight, I realize several questions should have been stated differently. The demographic question about household structure was not clear. Many people only specified whether they were of a single or double income family, they did not circle if they rented or owned their home. Having all four options on the same line led to many people omitting the last part. The rent and own options should have been on a separate line.

The other demographic question about occupation was also confusing to some. Instead of giving them options to choose from there should have been a blank line, so that the respondent could fill it in as they saw fit. Many circled more than one option. For example, some people considered themselves to be both a professional and salary employed.

The only other problem was with question four, which asked, “*If you were to begin researching your family tree, where would you look for information on how to do it*”. Many recipients read the question as asking where would they go for information on their family history instead of where they would go for information on *how to do* research into their family history. Generally, it was apparent how the person interpreted the

question by their answer, but this made the answer subject to my interpretation. For example, one respondent said that he would go to his cousin for information. He had stated in question 3b, that he did not research his family history because his cousin had done it all ready. So his answer in question four could have meant that he would go to his cousin because s/he had done the work and knew how to do the research or that he would go to his cousin because s/he has the information on the family history.

It would have been beneficial to have the survey tested before sending out all 500 of them. Having ten people fill out the survey would have highlighted some of the problems that arose from the structure of the questions.

Advantages

Despite these difficulties with the survey, valuable information was gathered which enabled me to produce a relatively clear picture of genealogy in Calgary. The high response rate of 28 percent and the fact that nearly half of those who did respond left their name and number indicates that generally there is a high interest in genealogy within Calgary. Even though 68.6 percent of the respondents did not consider themselves to be family historians, 82.3 percent of them did have an interest in their family history.

Twenty respondents were contacted for a follow up discussion on their interest in family history. This brought to light more motivational triggers for pursuing genealogy. It also emphasized the general interest level in Calgary, as all those contacted were eager and helpful in answering the additional questions. See Appendix C for the list of follow-up questions.

Survey Sample

The demographics of the city population were reflected in the survey. The four quadrants that make up Calgary were accurately represented in terms of the number of people who live in each section as a proportion of the city total. The survey sample also matched the percentage of people living in Calgary who own their home as opposed to renting (The City of Calgary 2001).

Where the survey did not match the general population of Calgary was in terms of age. Generally, more elderly people answered the survey. The percentage of respondents over 50 years old was twice that of those over the age of 50 living in Calgary. See Chapter Six for a complete analysis of the age of genealogists and how that compares to the general population.

GENEALOGICAL RESOURCE STUDY

This portion of the research investigated the resources available to genealogists in Calgary as well as information available on the internet. I looked at the various institutions in the city in terms of their services for genealogists, the resources available as well as inquiring into who uses their services and how often they use them.

Libraries and Archives

Librarians and Archivists were interviewed from the City Public Library, the City Archives, the University of Calgary Library and the Glenbow Library and Archives. Librarians at the AFHS Library and the Calgary LDS Centre were also interviewed. These interviews were short and informal, appointments were not set up; instead the

Librarian or Archivist on duty was approached. On occasion I was referred to the institution's genealogical expert.

The purpose of these interviews was to learn how many people use their services for genealogy and if applicable, do they have a separate section set up for genealogical research. The interviews were also to assess who uses the services of the institution, what help do they offer to researchers and do they charge for special services. See Appendix D for the list of questions asked of the different institutions.

Internet

Using the keyword *genealogy* on a variety of internet search engines produces over 2.2 million hits per search. The information available to genealogists via the internet is overwhelming. Various web pages were explored for their ease in terms of use and getting what you want from them. The web pages of the institutions visited in Calgary were looked at more closely, for the information they provide and resources they offer.

CHAPTER FIVE**HOW TO PURSUE GENEALOGY**

To facilitate non-genealogists' understanding of how genealogy can impact a person's life it is necessary to be familiar with the work that is involved in pursuing genealogy. As such, I will describe in this chapter what self-defined genealogists in contemporary Calgary do when they "do genealogy".

In this chapter I provide a generalized account, based on my observations and interviews — and, inevitably, on my own experience as a genealogist — of the norm of genealogists' practice, as I understand it, with some indications of the range of variability I found within my interview sample and others whom I encountered while conducting this research. I should make it clear: this does not purport to be an "insiders'" account, or rendering of reality from the perspective of the amateur genealogist, but rather an outsider's account, which is intended to make the world of the amateur genealogist accessible to non-genealogists, through the interpretation of a certain number of key concepts and practices of those who call themselves genealogists.

In addition to exploring what information is required and how that information is obtained, an investigation into the amount of time and money my informants said they spend on genealogy will also be reviewed. As well as touching on how much their travel plans appear to be affected by their genealogical interest.

In the final section of this chapter, how genealogists store and organize their data will be discussed. This will include an analysis on the use of computers and how this technology has changed the way genealogy is practiced.

Genealogy is an individual pursuit. The information required and where that data will be found depends on each person's family history. As well, a person's level of

experience with and dedication to genealogy will affect where s/he looks for information and what s/he considers to be valid.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Standards for Evidence

One of the important aspects of genealogy for people who have extensive experience and are highly dedicated to genealogical pursuits is verifying the evidence gathered which tell about the family ancestors. In recent years, professional genealogists and those with many years of experience have formed genealogical standards of evidence (Christensen 2000). One informant told me that genealogy used to use the legal standards of the *preponderance of evidence* for validating evidence but quickly found this to be too vague and so the Genealogical Proof Standard was created.

The Genealogical Proof Standard is a guide for genealogists to determine if the information they have is valid. Although this standard is for all genealogists, those who are experienced and dedicated to the science of genealogy are usually the ones who will adhere to its guidelines. One of the goals for these dedicated genealogists is to obtain the original sources of evidence; this includes copies of original certificates for vital statistics, as one cannot usually get the actual original document (Merriman 1997:11). Civic and church registries are considered primary evidence, as well as wills and land records. Transcripts, translations and abstracts of original sources are considered to be secondary evidence. Genealogical information also comes from compiled sources and so is considered to be secondary evidence. This type of information is in the form of histories, genealogies and periodicals. The basic rule of thumb is that primary evidence

is original, first-hand documentation, and all else is considered to be secondary information (Merriman 1997:12).

Serious genealogists feel that the information should be verified by at least three pieces of evidence to consider it true (Christensen 2000). The *preponderance of evidence* is a legal term, often used in inheritance cases, which holds that if enough secondary evidence is gathered to uphold a fact, then that fact is taken to be true. As mentioned above, many genealogists consider this proof of evidence not to be stringent enough, in that it implies only a *slight overweighing* of other data. Seriously dedicated genealogists want the *greater weight of evidence* to be stronger than that (Merriman 1997:14).

Much of the information gathered about the names and dates for people is often conflicting, so any genealogist must determine which is the correct information. This type of evaluation gets easier if the genealogist has experience with the type of information and has some knowledge about where the facts originated (ibid:15). Many mistakes are made in transcriptions and so a genealogist must work through these and think of other possibilities when the evidence does not fit. Even errors in original documents are common, so those cannot be taken at face value either.

Resources

Novice genealogists are told to first look to their family when starting a search into their family roots (A. Baxter 1984:9). A good source of raw data comes from the Family Bible. This bible often has a page in it specifically for recording the vital statistics of relatives. These include birth, marriage and death dates, as well as the information for children and spouses. Many family ancestors may have kept a collection of family papers. This can be anything from newspaper clippings about relatives to

personal letters. They will often include financial and business papers as well, such as insurance papers, mortgage and land deeds as well as school records or certificates and legal papers marking events in people's lives (Merriman 1997:46-47).

There is often a collection of photos that will help date and place ancestors in time. If one is so lucky, a relative may have already begun the work on the family history. The family members themselves are considered to be a resource of information as oral traditions and family stories are often passed down through the generations. However, finding other evidence to back up these stories is essential (ibid).

Civic records are also considered a vital resource of information for a genealogist. These are registered documents of marriages, land records, wills and certificates. Criminal records and lawsuits are also sources of information, as well as medical and tax records. A natural resource for genealogists are the census records, however, those within the last 100 years are restricted (ibid).

Church records provide a lot of information on family statistics. Registration records indicating when the family settled in the area, to cemetery information can be obtained. Baptisms, marriages and burial ceremonies that were held at the church will also be in their registry books. A history of the church is another source of information as it often tells who donated what and when to the church (ibid).

Ship and immigration records are tedious to read because of the amount of information a genealogist must wade through to find a single name, but they are invaluable in "crossing the pond", as my informants say. Making the connection from North America back to Europe can be a difficult task for many New World genealogists.

Military records also provide personal insight into the struggles a soldier went through in war. These records are detailed accounts of a soldier's promotions and times served as a prisoner of war, as well as providing information on any illnesses and reasons for discharge from the army. They also have the pension records of a soldier, which often also told of his spouse (ibid). Institutional records are also valuable to fill in gaps, such as schools, hospitals, societies and clubs an ancestor might have been a member of or attended.

Ronald Lambert conducted a genealogical study using the membership of the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS) as his sample. His survey found that 54 percent of active researchers consider census records to be the most valuable source for information. Thirty-three percent said living relatives were the most valuable resource; government records, birth, marriage and death records were mentioned by 30 percent and obituaries and church records received 26 percent and 25 percent respectively (1996a:18). Lambert noted that except for living relatives, all the other sources for information were primary sources.

Dedicated genealogists express that an important aspect of genealogy is to fill in the historical and social context of the time that an ancestor was living (ibid). This type of information is obtained in history books and the local FHS of the area of interest will also have historical accounts of the local history, such as the founding of a city, if there were any great disasters or problems the community had to deal with will all help to explain the choices made by ancestors.

Much of this information is online now, however there is always the question of information validity with this medium. Many of my informants said that they only use the internet as a starting point or guide on where to look for the actual evidence.

Churches, archives and FHS will house much of the needed information. A letter or email to the local institution of interest will often result in information. However, these places will not look endlessly for data. A genealogist usually has to provide specific information, such as a name, date and the type of document desired. These institutions will usually do a preliminary search for free and only charge for the photocopying. If a lengthier search is required they will either begin to charge a fee or refer the genealogist to a local professional researcher who will do the work for them.

GENEALOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

Much of the required genealogical data can be obtained through letters or emails to institutions. However, to save on potential research charges, it is often well worth a genealogist's time to look for the information locally. For genealogists living in Calgary, there are several institutions available. The most popular resource is the Calgary LDS Centre. On average they get about 625 people using their services in a month. The AFHS library is the second most popular venue used by genealogists, where they can see anywhere from 80 to 250 people use their services in a month. The other common source for information is the Calgary Public Library in the city's downtown, where over 100 people in a month will access the genealogical resources provided there.

The University of Calgary is another place for genealogical information, where they see upwards of 50 genealogists a month. The Glenbow Archives and Library will

have up to 40 people in a month. The City of Calgary also has an archive, but the information held there is specific to city employees, so they will only see about 5 to 20 people inquiring about genealogical information in a month. The information available from each of these institutions varies according to their speciality.

LDS Centre

The LDS centre has the most extensive resources. They have a database compiled of census and church records that goes into the millions in terms of the number of people listed. If they do not have the records on hand, the microfilm (or fiche) can be ordered for a small fee, just to cover costs, from the main library in Salt Lake City. Calgary's LDS centre fills approximately two thousand of these orders in a year. As there are so many of these local branches throughout North America the centre does not do research for people; rather they will refer a person to a professional or to the local FHS. The Calgary centre has on average 85 volunteers on staff, with usually 4 or 5 volunteers on hand to assist people who come to conduct research at the centre. These volunteers are friendly and will help people at any level of experience, from teaching them how to use a microfilm machine to assisting in actual research.

AFHS Library

The AFHS has a small but full library in the basement of the Southminster United Church in Southwest Calgary. The library covers a variety of subjects beyond the local history of Calgary and Alberta. It has information on the histories and civic records for almost all parts of the Western world. It also holds information on computers from how to use them to genealogical programs. The library has religious information, books on old occupations and family histories, as well as *how to do genealogy* books. There are

only five volunteers who maintain the library. When the library is open, about four times a month, there are 2 volunteers on hand. The main librarian encourages people to come at the times when the library is open, but for people coming in from out of town, she will open the library for them if they arrange a time. Like the LDS centre, the AFHS library does not do research for people; they too will be referred to professionals or to the volunteer members of the AFHS who will answer queries. Anyone can use the library, but only members of the society may sign out books.

The Calgary Public Library

The Calgary Public Library has plans to set up a section on their fourth floor for genealogists to work. At this point they have a row of books dedicated to genealogy. The books cover historical topics, biographies, place names and the origin of surnames, as well as *how to do genealogy* books, along with some videos. This row is situated beside the large history section for the library. Apart from this there is a section for genealogical source material. This houses civic records and lists, vital statistics, passenger lists and wills. There are also microfilm census records available and internet access.

The library offers general genealogical talks and has a lot of reference material for genealogy. There are no volunteers on staff at the library to assist with genealogical research but the librarians will do basic searches for people who know exactly what they need and where to look. For lengthily searches the library charges \$15 for out of town requests and \$10 for Calgarians per 5 pages of research but only if the person knows the basic information from which the search is to be based on. For those who want research done for them the library will refer them to the AFHS.

The University of Calgary Library

The University of Calgary Library has general information for a genealogist. There is no section dedicated to genealogy but they do recognize that they have relevant material and as such they have a genealogical section on their web page describing what is available at the library. The library does not have any volunteers to help genealogists, but they do have a Genealogy Librarian on staff, Jan Roseneder, who is referred to when a patron inquires about genealogical information. The library also has a map collection containing survey maps as well as homestead and county land maps. These cover most of Canada.

Roseneder offers talks and tours for genealogists and does answer mail and email requests for information. A basic search is free and anything over an hour she asks for a donation to the Museum of the Regiments; otherwise she refers them to the AFHS. The museum is affiliated with the University of Calgary and Roseneder is also the Military History Librarian there. The museum is a source of information for genealogists who have ancestors who served in Alberta's local armed forces. Roseneder has only one volunteer working for her at the museum. The volunteer helps with all sorts of military reference queries, including some that are genealogical.

The Glenbow Archives and Library

The Glenbow Archives and Library is a thorough source for local history and Metis genealogies. In general the library houses information pertaining to Calgary, Alberta and in some cases the Western provinces of Canada; information such as biographical dictionaries, registration indexes, directories, homestead maps and local histories. They also have local newspapers on microfilm, cemetery records and

genealogical periodicals for Alberta. The archives have information on settlers, church and school records, land and employment information as well as census lists for Western Canada and the records for countless clubs and societies for Alberta. It also has information on thousands of Western Canadians, as it collects government, business, organization, family and individual records. As well, the archives hold an extensive photographic collection covering the history of Western Canada. A part of this collection has been digitized and is available through their web page.

The Glenbow Archives are well known to genealogists who are looking for their Metis or Native ancestors. Geoff, a volunteer for the archives, has spent the last twenty years compiling information for Metis descendants. He also created an index for the Metis source material available at the archives. Geoff has given talks on the subject and currently has a Metis research workshop held once a week at his home. He is in the process of recruiting a volunteer to replace him at the archives, as he is nearing 85 years old. Geoff does answer requests for information and does not charge for this service.

The City of Calgary Archives

The City of Calgary Archives is very specific to Calgary and city employees. They house the human resource records for these employees and have biographies for senior staff. They also have some business information for famous Calgarians, as they related to the city, as well business licences are on file there. Information on building permits is also available, but only the assessment roles, not the land deeds, which are found at the Land Titles Office. The archives do hold the civic census records and the voter's lists. They also have the town records for what are now suburbs of Calgary: such as Bowness, Forestlawn and Crescent Heights. They have some reference material on the

history of Calgary, but this information can be found in the institutions listed above.

The archives do not do any research for people and usually refers them to local libraries and archives in Calgary as well as professional researchers.

RESOURCES USED and SUGGESTED

Having just reviewed the possible resources and local institutions for genealogists in Calgary, I will now discuss the resources actually used by genealogists and those suggested by the non-genealogists in the mail-out survey.

Resources Used

The most popular institutions used by the genealogists I interviewed are libraries and archives abroad. Whether people visit these places or write to them, 67 percent of genealogists say that they have used these institutions in their geographical areas of study.

The second most common source for information is the LDS centre and their internet database, the International Genealogical Index (IGI). Forty-nine percent of the genealogists said that they use, or have used, the centre and their web page to gather information. Four of the informants have also been to the main Mormon Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City.

Family is also a common source for information, where 44 percent of the informants said that they write to relatives and other people working on the same family for information. They also receive information from the family in the form of stories or actual family documents. In this sense relatives view the genealogist as the family historian and therefore keeper of family documents and information. A common

practice, mentioned by several informants, is that they first go through the family documents before they start any research in public institutions.

FHSs (excluding the AFHS) are common sources for information, at 18 percent, with two informants specifically mentioning the Somerset House in London, England. This archive is famous in genealogy as the prime source for information on English ancestors. It is so famous that a non-genealogist also mentioned it.

The Calgary Public Library is another common resource, also having 18 percent of the informants using their services. Four informants mentioned using the interlibrary loan service and all said that it was a wonderful and unknown service. The AFHS library was mentioned by 15 percent of the informants as a source for information.

Surprisingly, the internet is used as a source for actual data collection by only 10 percent of the informants. Ship records and general historical information are the more popular reasons for using the internet in this capacity.

The following each had two informants say that they use their services: church records from the original church, AFHS members, the University of Calgary Library and the Glenbow Archives.

The professional genealogists I interviewed said that they used all of the above listed resources for their research. Sydney Ann Beckett found in her study on genealogists and computers that experts and amateurs both use the same resources, however, experts get more information from a broader range of resources (1994:96).

Resources Suggested

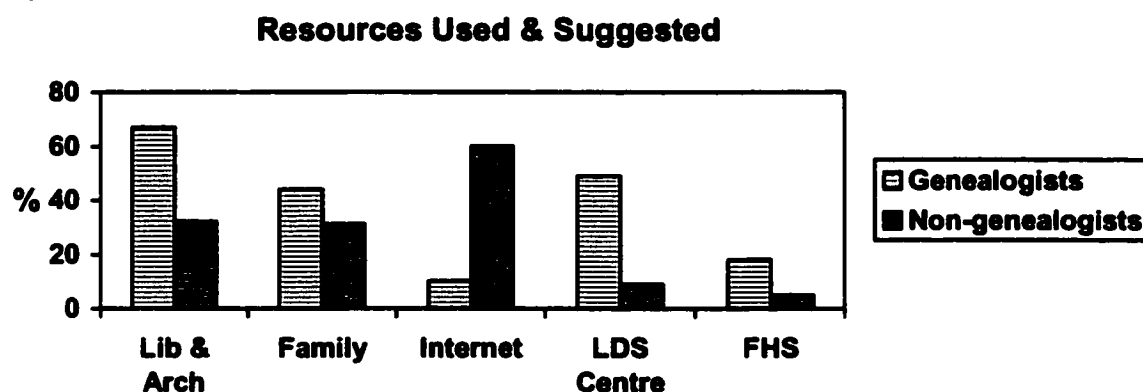
The most common resource suggested by non-genealogists was the internet, as 60 percent said they would look online for genealogical information. It may seem an ideal

place to find information but genealogists are quick to point out that the information found on the internet is unreliable and often costly, as such it is actually used for data collection by only a small percentage of genealogists.

Libraries and archives were mentioned by 32 percent of the non-genealogists, less than half of the percentage given by genealogists, who say it is their most common source for information. Family as a source for genealogical information was listed by 31 percent of the non-genealogists. This response is down only 13 percent from what genealogists said. The LDS Centre, which is used by nearly half of my informants, was only mentioned by 9 percent of the non-genealogists as a source for information (see Figure 5).

Other resources, each listed by less than 5 percent of the non-genealogists, were: related computer programs, church records, FHSs, professional genealogists, bookstores, various government agencies and travelling to the ancestral homeland. Eight percent of the non-genealogists said that they had no idea where to find such information.

Figure 1



Through this comparison it is clear that the internet is highly overrated by non-genealogists as a possible source for genealogical data. Non-genealogists underrated

libraries and archives as a possible source for data. A neophyte genealogist will soon discover most of the required information will be found in these institutions.

The non-genealogists also underrated the LDS Centre by 40 percent from what genealogists say is a common source for not only genealogical information, but as a learning tool for beginners as well. FHSs were underrated as well and none of the non-genealogists mentioned the AFHS.

Family was a common response for both genealogists and non-genealogists as a source for family information and to learn how to do genealogy, as so many of the survey respondents had relatives who had done genealogical work in the past.

TIME

Generally, the amount of time and money spent on genealogy, not only varies across people, but also across time. Meaning that a genealogist will spend more time and money on this pursuit at one point than at another.

The only general statement that can be made about the amount of time genealogists spend on their work is that *it depends*. When asked this question most informants had difficulty setting an average amount of time that they spend on their work in a week. Many said they do their work a “bit here and a bit there” during the day. Genealogical work is often done when there is available time in between daily activities or on holiday time. An informant said he does genealogy in blocks of time, when it is available, and so it is difficult to work out the average time in a week. Another informant said she does not spend a lot of time on it now, but sees herself spending more time on it when she retires.

Other informants said they only work on their genealogy in the winter months as the summer is filled with other activities. This tends to be a common occurrence as the AFHS only holds monthly meetings, on the first Monday of the month, from September to June. A woman told me at the annual Wild Rose Seminar, which is a weekend genealogy seminar put on by the AFHS in the fall, that she attends the seminar each year as a way of getting her started on her genealogy work for the year as she stops during the summer.

Receiving new information will often cause genealogists to work more hours on their family history. The opposite also holds, where one genealogist told me that he is not working on his family history at present because he has “hit a dead end”.

A person will also generally work on their genealogy more if there is a set goal in mind, such as a book they want to publish or gather information together for a family reunion. Many genealogists will also work diligently getting questions together and missing information they need to find when they plan to go to ancestral homelands or to the main Mormon Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City.

On occasion genealogists set time aside during the week to work on their family history. This time depends on their work and daily life schedules. One genealogist sets Sunday afternoons aside; her family apparently respects this and does not bother her during this time. Another woman spends early mornings and late evenings on her genealogical work, this works around her role as mother and her career. A couple that pursue genealogy together said they spend “quite a lot of time on it in a week”. The woman was ashamed to admit the amount of time she works on her family history and the man could tell me that he spends about eight hours a week doing data entry. Another

genealogist could tell me that she spends about eight to ten hours a week on genealogy, but much of that time is spent helping others get started with their own family history.

MONEY

To pursue genealogy does not necessarily take money, however a person can spend a lot of money on the activity if s/he wants to. Lambert found that about half of his OGS sample spent between \$100 and \$500 on genealogy in 1993. Thirty percent of them spent less than \$100 and 10 percent of them spent over \$1000 in that year. As Lambert points out these figures are not accurate as people can forget what they have spent on genealogy and many expenditures for genealogy are grouped with other expenses (1996a:16).

Rather than having my informants give me an amount that they spend on genealogy in a year, I asked them to tell me whether they noticed a great financial commitment in practicing genealogy. Just as many people said yes as said no to this question. Several informants gave clarifying statements to their answers. One genealogist said she would never admit what she spends to her husband. She said it was a costly endeavour but it was well worth the expense; she did not consider it a waste of money in any way. Another informant said she does not spend a great deal on genealogy but that any spare money she has she does use it on her genealogy. One genealogist said he has not spent any money on this activity.

An informant said she did notice a financial commitment and explained that she could not afford to order documents. She also made the observation that the cost to pursue genealogy is why family historians often charge relatives for copies of the family

history. One informant commented, "Yes genealogy is expensive, but it is like any other hobby". She also observed that this activity has become more expensive with the introduction of the internet.

Many genealogical websites will start a search for your family name and then charge for a subscription if you want to actually see the results. Writing to libraries, archives and FHSs will often only cost the price of postage and the photocopying of the information found. Many FHSs will only ask for a nominal donation for their research efforts on your behalf.

Finally, a genealogist commented, "this endeavour gets more expensive as you do it, more documents need to be ordered and travelling overseas becomes desirable and even necessary".

As part of this question the informants were asked what they spend their money on. Ordering documents is a common answer. Other items include books, stamps, photocopying and paper, computer hardware and updating computer software. Money is also spent on FHSs and internet memberships, magazine subscriptions and restoring old photos, which can become quite costly. One genealogist is also spending money on redoing gravestones for close relatives.

TRAVEL

Every informant had their own response to the question of whether their genealogical interests influenced their travel plans. Over all the answer to this question is yes. Only two informants told me that they have not travelled for genealogical purposes and have no plans to do so.

The majority of genealogists said that wherever they go they try to do genealogical work. They do not travel to sunny beaches, but rather spend their holiday time with family or going to ancestral homelands to conduct genealogical research. Many had made the “pilgrimage” to Salt Lake City, indicating that this trip is necessary for all genealogists and if you are passing by, ie: returning from Arizona, as a genealogist, you must stop to do research.

Although vacations are family and genealogically oriented, not many said that the sole purpose of travelling to a place was for genealogy. However, several informants said that each return visit results in more and more time spent on genealogical research.

Beyond conducting research in the ancestral homeland, many genealogists want to meet distant cousins who still live in the area. Through these meetings several friendships have emerged. These visits also involve going through cemeteries, which the genealogists express that they thoroughly enjoy. One informant said that he “finds it interesting to stand on the land where his ancestors lived. It gives you a different perspective on life”.

Many informants have plans to travel to ancestral homelands for genealogy, some indicating that they would do so if they had the money. The genealogists interviewed want to see the land, smell the air and talk to the locals. They want to visit the old family church and see what genealogical data they can get from the local archives and FHS.

To many people passionate about genealogy this is a necessary journey. Documents can be ordered from these places but so much more is found when they go through the records themselves. One informant told me that she thinks that it is too expensive to hire a local professional to do the research for her; she would rather just go

there herself. Clearly, it is not the money, as it would probably cost more to travel to her ancestral homeland than to hire a professional.

ORGANIZING and STORING INFORMATION

Genealogy requires organizational skills in terms of establishing some sort of filing system. The pursuit of family history results in tremendous amounts of paper that must be carefully sorted and stored. The documents include all primary sources of information on the family, such as certificates, wills, land deeds, mortgages, etc. Whether a genealogist is an avid computer user or not, correspondence is generated as one must be in contact with others and institutions in their search for information.

Paper

All of my informants had some sort of filing system for their genealogical records. The most popular method is to use binders. Each binder is for one family and the individuals are separated within the binder. Others use filing cabinets, but again the families are separated along with the individuals within each family. This organization aspect of genealogy is often what attracts some to the endeavour in the first place. Many of my informants told me that they liked the organizational side of genealogy.

According to Beckett there was a dramatic rise in the use of computers by genealogists in the early 1990s (1994:45). Before this time, in the 1970s and 1980s when genealogy in general was rising in popularity in the Western world, family lineages were produced on long rolls of charts and pedigree pages. These were written by hand and often difficult to follow. Information on the individual ancestors and their families were often recorded on recipe cards (Fyvie 2002). One of my informants still uses this system,

even though her husband has recorded the information into the genealogy software program they own.

Computer

The computer has been a substantial benefit to the libraries and archives storing the mass amounts of genealogical data. The Mormons quickly used microphotography when it improved in the 1930s as a means of copying original documents from Europe (Mayfield 1983:112). Now these records are slowly being indexed on computers so that access to them will be efficient and timely (Turnbaugh 1983), especially when access to the computer indexes are available on the internet.

The introduction of personal home computers revolutionized the organizational process and means of data storage for genealogists. The paperwork still requires filling but the means by which the names and information is stored has changed dramatically. Robert Fyvie, an accredited Genealogist, made the comment during a lecture that “the home computer was built for genealogy” (2002). The sentiment he is expressing is that genealogy has excelled with the use of the computer. Word processing programs make writing one’s family history easier than using a typewriter or even writing it by hand. As any academic knows, writing requires a great deal of revision and for a genealogist compiling their family history, there is always some information to add or correct.

Of course a great asset of computers are the genealogy software programs. There are many varieties of these programs but they all basically do the same thing, they sort and store the raw data of a lineage. Rachel Fisher discovered in her study of Jewish genealogy, when data is put into a genealogy software program it becomes clear what information is missing, which often sparks an interest in the person to then pursue the

needed information (2000:89). One of my informants said that he loves history and learning about his family, and that is why he practices genealogy. However, it became apparent during the interview that it is the numerous computer programs that he can play with, which give him a passion for genealogy.

Gone are the days of spreading the lengthy pedigree charts on the living room floor so that they could be seen as a whole, somewhat like fitting a jigsaw puzzle together. Today, a genealogist can print out a family outline, covering as many generations as needed, these outlines are clearly printed on consecutive pages, no assembly required. These programs also allow the genealogist to add notes or stories about the individuals on their own page; one can even add photos and audio recordings of the individual. Once in the computer a genealogist can download their database onto the internet and share it with the world.

Internet

This brings us to the issue of the internet and genealogy. Many companies and professionals boast about the ease and low cost of gathering data from the internet. After testing several of these companies, Ancestry.com, MyTree.com, and Genealogy.com, I have found that it is not that easy or cheap. Any online genealogy company will let you do a search for a family ancestor for free. If you want to actually see any of the results you must subscribe to their company. The costs range from \$5 US for 10 days of searching to hundreds of dollars for a yearly subscription.

What is available online are indexes for a large number of databases, such as census records, military records, cemetery lists and so on. "Much of what is on the Web

now is akin to signposts—lists of documents but rarely the documents themselves” (August et al. 1999:55).

The main concern with getting information from the internet is its validity. As mentioned above, experienced genealogists are concerned with sources and referencing those sources. One major draw back of internet databases is that it is never certain where the information came from and how accurate it is (Beckett 1994, Fyvie 2002).

Experienced genealogists, my informants included, advise to use the internet as a stepping-stone to find the original sources (Kilgannon 2001). All of the computer-using genealogists that I interviewed said the information from the internet must be verified, it cannot be taken at face value. The major concern is “the possible use of inaccurate methods of collecting and reporting data” (Rising in Beckett 1994:7). Although there are genealogical standards for evidence, whether a person uses them or not cannot be known when taking information from the internet.

Fyvie points out another downside of extracting data from the indexes on the internet, that information can be lost in the transcription. For example, a baptismal index on the internet will list the parents’ names, the date of birth and the church. It will not list the godparents or any other notes made in the original registry book (2002).

The one positive feature of the internet is email and the notice boards available to genealogists. One of the most important aspects of genealogy is communication. A family historian must contact family members and public institutions for information. Email has provided an invaluable medium for easy and fast communication. The internet also provides a communal place for general queries where people from around the world

can connect with others who are conducting similar research and they can exchange information.

As indicated in Chapter Four, it was difficult to find genealogists who did not use a computer for their genealogical work. Seven out of the thirty-three informants (21%) I interviewed did not use a computer on a regular basis for their genealogy. Lambert found that 55 percent of the genealogists he surveyed used a computer. The use of computers is not age restricted either, as Lambert discovered, 37 percent of those over 70 used the computer for their genealogy work (1996a:19). Beckett learned that 77 percent of the computer-using genealogists in her survey were over 45 (1994:76).

CHAPTER SIX**A PROFILE OF GENEALOGISTS**

In order for my research to be used in comparison with other studies done on genealogists in North America, I had to verify that my subjects generally matched the profile of the genealogists in those other studies. To that end, I will explore and compare the socio-demographics of contemporary genealogists in this chapter.

Once considered a hobby for retirees, genealogy today is practiced by a wide variety of people (Asch 1998:38). There are some similarities among genealogists in terms of age, employment and education level but generally they cannot be neatly categorized. To be successful in the search for one's roots it takes skill, time and dedication. This means those practitioners who stick to it long enough to be considered genealogists are generally determined, have some experience of post-secondary education, and have the leisure time and resources to work on it. Certainly more genealogists are retired, but there are many who work full time as well. They simply take the time out of their busy lives to pursue the work.

Based on the information gathered for this thesis and comparable studies, I will investigate the gender differences of genealogists, their average age range, their marital status and employment, as well as their mobility tendencies. Genealogists' education level and the relationship between genealogy and other leisure activity pursuits will also be explored in this chapter.

GENDER

In the AFHS, 65 percent of the members are women and 35 percent are men. Lambert found similar results for the OGS at it was comprised of 63 percent women and

37 percent men (1995a:74). Cardell Jacobson's study on the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society (WSGS) found that 88 percent of the genealogists were women (Jacobson et al. 1989:196). This suggests that in genealogy women outnumber men by at least nearly two and a half to one, but these statistics may be misleading.

Peggy Sinko and Scott Peters did a survey on genealogists using the resources of the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, and discovered that nearly half of those genealogists did not belong to a FHS. Their study found the gender difference to be significantly smaller: 59 percent were women and 41 percent were men (1983:102). The Calgary wide mail-out survey conducted for my thesis turned up a gender ratio exactly opposite to that of the Chicago study. Of the self-identified genealogists who responded to the survey, 41 percent were women and 59 percent were men. Both of these surveys suggest that there are many male genealogists.

Perhaps the statistics gathered by Lambert, Jacobson and myself on the gender ratio of FHSs are really showing that more women join genealogical societies than their male counterparts. There have been several studies about gender differences in styles of learning. One such study by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule argues that women tend to learn better and feel more comfortable in community settings, where learning is done through conversation and discussion (1986). They found that men preferred to learn in a more objective, detached setting, where learning is more independent (Clinchy 1996). This study offers some understandings of why more women tend to join societies than men.

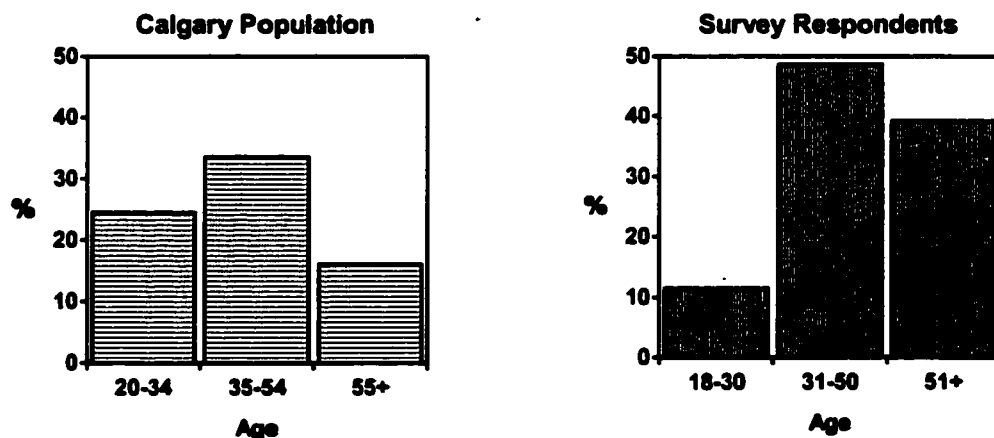
AGE

Lambert found that 56 percent of his Ontario sample was over 60 years of age; he did not break these numbers down by gender (1995a:74). Jacobson also did not divide his statistics by gender, but found that the average age of the WSGS membership was 53 years, which was about 10 years older than the general population of Wisconsin (Jacobson et al. 1989:196). The average age of the informants interviewed for my thesis was 66 for men and only 54 for women.

In Calgary, 24.5 percent of the general population is between the age of 20 and 34; 33.5 percent are between the age of 35 and 55; and 16.1 percent are over 55 (The City of Calgary 2001). The age distribution for my survey respondents was 11.4 percent between the age of 18 and 30, 48.6 percent in the age range of 30 and 50, and 39.2 percent were over the age of 50. The number of respondents over the age of 50 was over twice that of the general population, and respondents between the ages of 30 and 50 outnumbered the general population by 15 percent. On the other end of the scale, respondents in the age range of 18 to 30 were not even half of the general population in that age category (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Age Distribution



This indicates that the younger generation either had little interest in filling out the survey or they had an older adult fill it out instead, (note: the instructions for the survey did request that an adult fill out the questionnaire and if someone in the house did genealogy to have them fill it out). The high percentage of people over the age of 50 among the respondents suggests that although the majority of respondents are between 30 and 50, there is certainly a greater interest in family history in the older generation than in the middle age group.

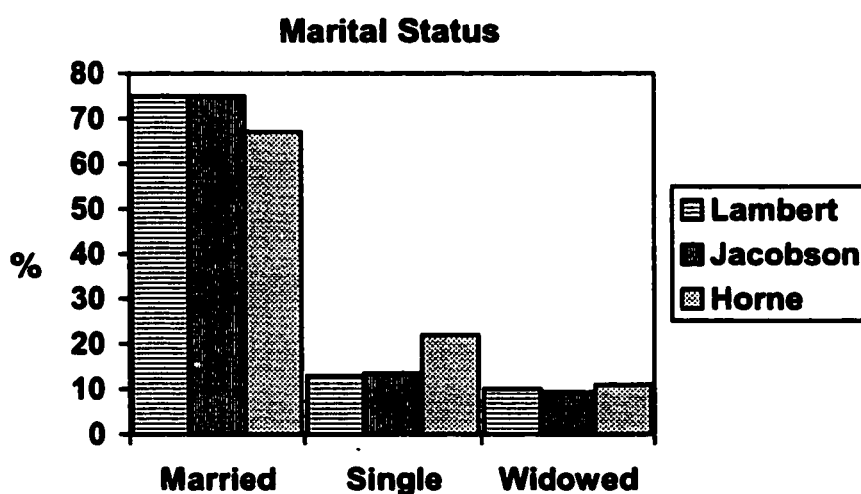
Women tend to take up genealogy as an activity at a younger age than men. The men interviewed for this thesis were on average 52 years old when they started genealogy; the women were on average 42 years old. What is interesting is that almost half the women clarified their answer of when they started genealogy by saying that they had an interest before they started. Ten of the twenty-two women said that they had “always” been interested in family history. Some even pinpointed the age at which they became interested. This was often marked by a significant event in life: such as a major move or a death in the family. Another three women stated that they had been interested in genealogy for about twenty years before they actually started to work on it. The men on the other hand often cited an event that caused them to start genealogy almost immediately. For example, several male informants said that their parents had asked them to do some research into the family history and so they started on it at that point.

MARITAL STATUS

Lambert found that 75 percent of the OGS membership were married, 13 percent were single and 10 percent were widowed (1995a:77). Jacobson’s study showed nearly

the exact set of statistics: 75 percent of the WSGS membership were married, 13.5 percent were single and 9.3 percent were widowed (Jacobson et al. 1989:196). The informants interviewed for my thesis also have similar statistics for their marital status: 67 percent are married, 22 percent are single, and 11 percent are widowed (see Figure 3). Of the single people, half of them were divorced. Just under a quarter of the married people are in their second marriage. As Jacobson comments, genealogists tend to be married (*ibid*).

Figure 3



EMPLOYMENT

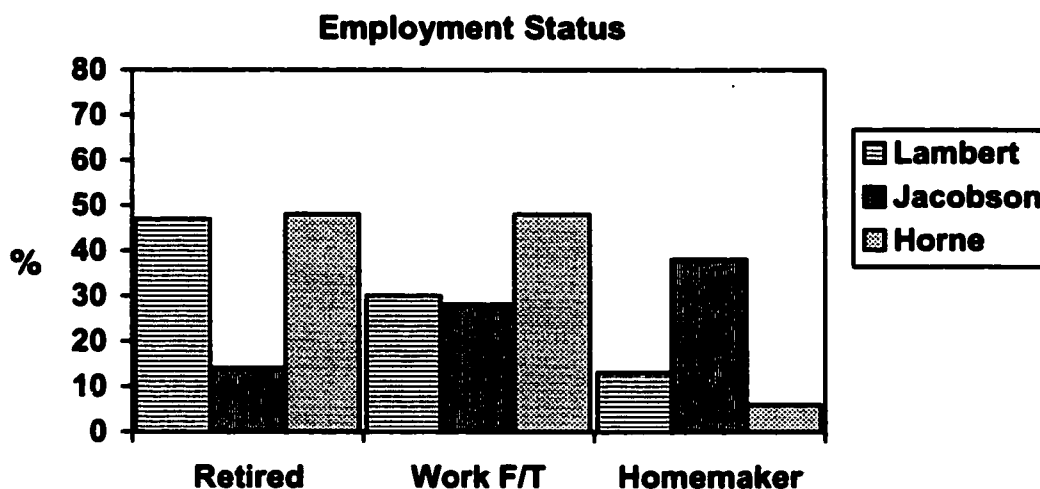
Variety was found across the three studies of Lambert, Jacobson and myself, in terms of the employment status of the genealogists in our samples. This variety may reflect the regional demographics of each geographical area of study.

In the OGS survey, 47 percent of Lambert's sample described themselves as being retired, 30 percent said they worked full time while 13 percent were homemakers

(1995a:78). However, Jacobson's survey revealed that only 14 percent of the WSGS membership was retired. Those who worked full time made up 28 percent of Jacobson's sample and 38 percent of them were homemakers (Jacobson et al. 1989:197).

The genealogists interviewed for my thesis varied in terms of their current employment. Nearly half (48%) of the informants work full time with an equal number I have categorized as being semi-retired or fully retired. Only two (or 6%) of the informants are homemakers (see Figure 4). Among the respondents to the mail-out survey only 19 percent of those who said they are genealogists are retired, with an equal number of both women and men in this category.

Figure 4



Jacobson's sample shows a clear difference in their employment status from either Lambert's sample or my own. Perhaps, Jacobson's sample reflects a high percentage of homemakers in Wisconsin.

Among the self-identified retired informants I interviewed, I separated those who are semi-retired from those who are fully retired. These informants did not consider

themselves to be semi-retired, but I have labelled them as such because of the part-time work or volunteering they pursue. Among the female informants, five of the twenty-two are retired and two are semi-retired. One informant teaches English as a Second Language, and the other, a former nurse, writes manuals for the hospital she used to work in. The rest of the women (39%) work full time and two of them are homemakers.

The majority of the male genealogists interviewed, six of the eleven (or 55%), are semi-retired. Three of these men volunteer and one works in the genealogical field. Two of the men volunteer in managerial positions at the AFHS, one does research for others and the fourth is paid by the National Genealogical Society in the United States to report on genealogy software programs. One of the other semi-retired men is now a writer in his retirement years and the other manages his own financial portfolio. Three of the men still work full time, one is a professional genealogist, and the other two are close to retirement. The other three men interviewed are fully retired.

Considering the variety found across all three studies, these statistics go against the stereotype that genealogy is for the retired, for both men and women. However, the working-women all commented that they would be able to work on genealogy more in their retirement years, something which they all looked forward to doing. Several of the men started genealogy in their retirement and this interest led them back to either working or volunteering in the genealogical field.

MOBILITY

According to Jacobson, popular and professional wisdom argues “individuals who experience social dislocation such as geographical or social class mobility...would be

more interested in genealogy than those who do not experience such changes” (1986:347).

However, Jacobson showed in his own research, that this was not the case. He compared the genealogists of the WSGS with people engaged in other hobbies and the population as a whole using the 1970 Wisconsin census records. Jacobson found that the people who were interested in their genealogical roots not only belonged to families that had immigrated to North America before the Twentieth century, but who also still lived in the general rural area of where their family originally settled. It was the *stayers* rather than the *movers* who were interested in their roots and those with long standing rural origins instead of new urban origins showed such an interest (ibid:353).

Jacobson hypothesised that people with old immigration ties to the land they still lived on were more threatened by social disruptions than people who were accustomed to change and mobility. This would “explain the apparent increase in genealogical interest during times of high social change and still be consistent with the results presented in [his] paper” (ibid:356).

Lambert tested Jacobson’s hypothesis with his own research sample from the OGS and likewise found that his informants tended to have “substantial residential stability” (Lambert 1996b:131). He found that on average OGS members had moved 3.6 times since leaving their parents’ home (ibid:130). However, Lambert did not compare the mobility of the OGS members with the general population of Ontario.

I too wanted to test this notion by asking the informants to recap for me all the places they had lived during their lives. Calgary is a relatively young community and has a higher population of people who have moved there than those who were born there. In

1996, 21.7 percent of Calgary's population had immigrated to Canada. This level of immigration is high in comparison with other Canadian urban centres (The City of Calgary 2000). As such, the majority of the informants interviewed have moved in their lives. Only two of them were born in Calgary and had never moved. On average the informants have moved 5.3 times in their lives, with the majority moving between four and seven times. One had moved eleven times in her life. My informants do not match the previous studies findings that *stayers* tend to pursue genealogy more.

As Calgary is a young city compared with cities in both Wisconsin and Ontario, it is understandable that genealogists living in Calgary have most likely moved there, where genealogists in Eastern North America may have long standing family ties to the communities they still live in. My study has shown that it is not only *stayers* who pursue genealogy, but that *movers* are also interested in their family history.

EDUCATION

Lambert found that nearly 50 percent of his sample of genealogists had post-secondary schooling (1995a:77). Jacobson discovered that 68 percent of the WSGS membership "had attended at least some college, and 44 percent had actually graduated from college" (Jacobson et al. 1989:198).

My research revealed that 88 percent the informants had some post-secondary education. Only one informant had not finished high school and three of the genealogists did not take any courses or degrees after high school. Another genealogist went into the military and did not finish high school until later in life, but then he also went on to take some college courses.

Eleven of the genealogists had taken some courses after high school; most of them took business and secretarial courses. One woman took a communications course and another took Early Childhood Development in order to become a daycare provider. One man had attended the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology for electrical training. Two of the six professional genealogists interviewed had taken genealogical certification courses from Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah.

Nine of the informants had received Bachelor degrees; most of them in the Arts except two women were nurses and a man had a BSc in Electrical Engineering. The most popular BA was for Education, where four informants had this degree. One man had a BA in Business and the last BA was in Applied Justice. Four informants had Master of Arts degrees; one in Education, one in Business, the other in Geography and the fourth in Media Studies, with a focus on media for children. Finally, three of the informants had received their Doctoral degree: one for Mining, another for Sociology and the third was a medical doctor.

What can be said about my informants is that they all work, or worked, in the field(s) in which they had obtained their education. Several commented that they had been taking courses all their lives in various disciplines and they did not see that changing in the future. One even said that she was not a “completer”, she does not like to finish things and so genealogy was a perfect fit for her, as it never ends.

Certain tendencies can be seen to emerge in the types of disciplines the genealogists went into for their careers. Five of them became educators and four became health or childcare workers. Two took communications courses and one received her doctorate in Sociology. All of these disciplines relate to people: studying them, learning

how to communicate with them, educating and caring for them. Genealogists tend to be people-oriented as many informants indicated that they like to hear peoples' life stories, whether they relate to their family or not.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

In order to get a general sense of what genealogists do in their lives besides genealogy, the informants I interviewed were asked what other leisure activities they pursued. (Here, the term "hobby" was avoided because later in the interview the informants were asked to define their genealogy work and I did not want to bias them to label it as a hobby).

In Lambert's survey of OGS genealogists he listed other "hobbies" the genealogists might pursue, they had to circle the ones they participated in. The list was short and only mentioned "hobbies" relating to genealogy: such as heraldry, local history and gravestone studies (1994). My question about other leisure activities was open-ended and so is not comparable to Lambert's question. The few other studies done on genealogists do not comment on the genealogists' other leisure activities, so comparisons to another study for this topic cannot be made.

Genealogists do not spend all their time in archives and churches. Sixty-seven percent of my informants engage in some form of physical activity. A variety of activities are listed such as tennis, skiing, golfing, swimming, cycling and hiking are the more popular ones, but one does yoga and another square dances. One is a marathon runner and she says that it helps her with her genealogy because it teaches her

perseverance and patience; two virtues she believes are needed to successfully pursue genealogy.

Reading is the second most popular activity. The genealogists interviewed tend to like to read in general but specifically they like to read about history, especially where it relates to their own family history. Many also like to read mystery novels, complementing the tendency that genealogists also enjoy playing detective (Lambert 1996a:12). One informant said she likes to do jigsaw puzzles, which is also common among genealogists. Lambert found that 46 percent of his informants liked to solve jigsaw puzzles (1995b:150).

Of the informants interviewed 48.5 percent of them enjoy socializing as opposed to spending all their leisure time alone researching their genealogy. Many do community work; often volunteering for the AFHS and others said that they spend their leisure time with family. Other informants said they enjoy spending time with their friends.

Many genealogists interviewed do needlework of some kind. Most do the work because they like to do it, others however, do the work because it is a family tradition. One woman does embroidery because three generations of women before her did it. She commented that when she embroiders it makes her think how amazing her great-grandmother was to be able to do such a task in dim candlelight. One genealogist, a carpenter by trade, spins and weaves wool on a spinning wheel he made, modelled after the Metis wheels, which are a part of his heritage.

Other leisure activities are listed from gardening to travelling. The following table lists the leisure activities mentioned by the informants and the number of participants in each activity out of the thirty-three people interviewed.

Figure 5 **Leisure Activities**

| LEISURE ACTIVITY | NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Physical Activities | 22 |
| Reading | 11 |
| Needlework | 11 |
| Community Work | 9 |
| Gardening | 7 |
| Family Activities | 5 |
| Collecting Items | 2 |
| Socializing with Friends | 2 |
| Preserving Photos | 2 |
| Listening to Music | 2 |
| Jigsaw Puzzles | 1 |
| Watching Sports | 1 |
| Travelling | 1 |
| Camping | 1 |
| Baking | 1 |

A lot of the other leisure activities genealogists participate in relate back to their genealogy work in some manner. It can be direct, such as volunteering for the AFHS or reading history books relating to one's own family history; or it can be indirect such as the values learned through running by the one informant. Needlework is often done because it is a family tradition and spending time with family is enjoyable because of the value genealogists place on family.

SUMMARY

On the whole my Calgary sample of genealogists whom I interviewed and those self-identified genealogists who responded to the mail-out survey, reflect the average genealogist in North America. As in both Ontario and Wisconsin, genealogists in Calgary are generally over the age of 50 and are married. More female genealogists tend

to be members of their local FHS; yet, as in Chicago, Calgary has many male genealogists who are not members of any FHS. The majority of genealogists in Calgary have some post-secondary education; Lambert and Jacobson also concluded that genealogists tend to have this level of education. However, more genealogists in Calgary work full-time and are more mobile in their living arrangements than those in either Ontario or Wisconsin. Not comparable to other studies, genealogists in Calgary tend to lead active and social lives beyond their pursuit of genealogy.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE GENEALOGY COMMUNITY

The commitment a person can have towards genealogy is often reinforced and even strengthened through their social interaction with other genealogists, family and friends. In this chapter I will explore the social aspects of the genealogical world.

Those on the outside often imagine genealogy as being a solitary endeavour and genealogists are seen as being alone in dark corners of archives gathering their information. However, non-genealogists are not in a position to see the social and interactive community of genealogists. As I have previously stressed, at the core of genealogy is communication. Family historians must constantly contact relatives, archives and other researchers in their quest for information. Genealogists tend to enjoy sharing their knowledge of not just their own family history but they also welcome the opportunity to help others find information and get started on their own genealogy. This sharing of information and ideas is a strong and important aspect of pursuing genealogy.

In this chapter I investigate the social links that develop among genealogists as a result of their family history pursuits and I discuss their membership and involvement with FHSs. Calgary's AFHS will be closely examined to see how members participate in their society. How information is shared, the support groups and courses offered and how genealogists benefit from these resources will be covered in this chapter. Finally, a look at the friendships that form as a result of shared interests in genealogical practice and techniques will be explored, both those made through genealogy and friends turned into genealogists.

FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES

As noted, outsiders to the world of genealogy can easily miss the social aspects of this endeavour. However, as a member of their community it becomes quickly apparent that genealogists maintain a strong social life in connection with genealogy. As Robert Stebbins notes, there are often sub-cultures within serious leisure activities (1992:7) and the genealogy community is no exception.

Genealogists passionate about their work shared with me that they often find they cannot express the joys and pains of their research with friends and family who are not interested. An ideal outlet for them to express these feelings is their local FHS. Filled with many other people in the same predicament, these societies offer genealogists the means to share their genealogical experiences with others who will not only listen but who will also be able to help with problems.

Many genealogists belong to FHSs abroad that are the local societies for their ancestral homeland. However, there is no social contact with members from these foreign societies because of the physical distance separating them. As a result many genealogists also join a FHS in their own residential locality so that they will have social contact with other genealogists.

Although genealogy is similar in characteristics to Stebbins' notion of a Liberal Arts hobbyist (see Chapter Three), it does differ in terms of its social world. Stebbins states that, typically, these hobbyists have no, or only a weakly organized, social world in which to participate. However, genealogists do have a large community in which they can join and contribute. This social world often becomes a commitment as people volunteer for their local FHS and are obliged to participate in events.

Out of the thirty-three genealogists I interviewed, twenty-two of them are members of the AFHS and another five had been members in the past. Six of the informants did not belong to any society, but four of them thought they might join one in the future. Eleven of the genealogists only belong to the AFHS and another eleven belong to other societies in addition to the AFHS. One is a member of ten societies and another belongs to seven societies. The average degree of affiliation is to be a member of three or five different FHSs.

As mentioned above, most of the other FHSs relate to the geographical area where the ancestors came from or their social or religious affiliation. For example some FHSs focus on a particular group, such as the Mennonites or all the descendents from the Mayflower. Other societies are regional and give the genealogist access to research assistance and general social and historical information for that part of the world.

Although the AFHS has several special interest groups (SIGs) covering various parts of Europe and North America the members are generally Anglo-Saxons. This is reflected in the fact that of the thirty-three informants, five of them are members of twelve different English FHSs. This number may not seem large but other than a few American FHSs the informants mentioned no other international societies.

Under the umbrella of the AFHS, several informants are also members of various SIGs within it. The most popular one is the Computer SIG, which not only has a general computer group but also software specific groups. The other SIGs specialize in areas or people of the world. These SIGs allow for a smaller group of people, all with a similar focus in genealogy, to get together and have in-depth discussions in a more intimate setting.

Two past members of the AFHS told me that they discontinued their membership because they found that the society had become too large for proper socialization and interaction; there are about 150 members who attend the monthly meetings. This is a revealing comment, and suggests that members seek a more intimate setting within which to interact with other genealogists. I was also told this by another AFHS member who is unhappy with the society because of the lack of socialization. One past member said that he found the fifteen-minute break during the meeting to be too short, it did not allow for quality interaction with other members. These people expressed that it is easier to communicate and interact with others if the group is small. The unhappy member will continue her membership at the AFHS because the Computer SIG still allows for interaction with other genealogists in a smaller setting.

It should be noted that these comments were the only negative sentiments shared by my informants about their experience in FHSs. There was a notable absence of disputes and caddishness mentioned by the genealogists. Perhaps my informants wanted to show their experience of genealogy in a good light, and simply did not mention these sorts of tensions. One aspect of leisure activity is that there is freedom of entrance and continuance (Shamir 1988:251). If disputes and competition among genealogists become unpleasant for a person, s/he is simply free to discontinue her or his association with the social group.

Analysis of my interview data seems to reveal that genealogists belong to FHSs for two reasons. One reason is to gain access to the society's resources, both books and people. The other reason is for social contact with other genealogists. To this end they appear to join their local FHS even if they have no research interests in the geographical

area for which it maintains records. As mentioned in Chapter Six, not very many Calgarians actually have family history focused in this area. Rather, they appear to have joined the AFHS for the support, help and social aspects that the society offers them. The FHSs allow genealogists to learn “from each other how to identify, locate and interpret the records vital to their research” (Bidlack 1983:13).

The AFHS can offer a genealogist a variety of support for their research or means for social interaction. Thirteen of the informants volunteer for the AFHS in some capacity. Several help with the operations of the society and others help with SIGs, seminars or research projects. A couple of the genealogists also help others to get started on their own research.

The AFHS has many volunteers in its organization. Volunteers operate the library, there are many people who answer queries from non-members and others help with research projects such as recording gravestones. The board members, writers for the newsletters and magazine and the maintenance of the web page are all volunteers as well. The society has a strong core membership of persons who are willing to help others with their genealogical endeavours.

In Lambert’s study of members of the OGS, he found that not only do genealogists seek out help from fellow genealogists, but that they also offer help when they can. Lambert asked in his questionnaire about the volunteer work members did for their society. Nearly 20 percent of his sample indicated that they had served or were serving on an executive or a committee in the two-year time period covered. He also found that age was not a factor in this statistic but that gender was, “women were significantly more likely to [volunteer] than men” (1996a:19). Approximately 30 percent

of his respondents also reported that they had volunteered on a project to produce information resources for general genealogical use. For example, the AFHS recently completed a project that indexed the names in the Calgary cemeteries. Lambert's respondents who helped with research projects were equally represented in terms of gender but that more people over the age of 40 did this type of volunteering (ibid:20). Almost half of Lambert's respondents (45%) said "they had devoted some percentage of their research time to non-relatives during the specified period" (ibid).

Genealogists have a reputation of being friendly and helpful people. Russel Bidlack, from the University of Michigan, noted that there has been a substantial increase in the genealogical source material available to the public because more people are practicing genealogy, "and the fact that a characteristic of genealogists has always been a willingness to share their findings" (1983:12). My findings in Calgary support these points.

One excellent source of communication for genealogists in Calgary and beyond is the Dist-Gen. This electronic mailing list is maintained by the AFHS but welcomes non-members to subscribe. It offers a forum for genealogists to make queries and observations to other genealogists. I have subscribed to the list for a year, and in that time I have found that daily discussions are held in this medium. Some are serious, such as warning others about making living relatives vital statistics available online where people can steal their information and use it to gain access to credit cards and other personal information. Other discussions are about a person's query as they try to pool their knowledge in an effort to answer the question.

LEARNING and SEMINARS

FHSs offer a resource for beginners to learn how to pursue genealogy. Through their libraries, courses offered, meetings and the members a novice can make rapid progress in learning the ins and outs of genealogy. However, the most common form of learning how to conduct genealogical research is through reading books or taking courses. Of the informants interviewed for this thesis, 36.4 percent said that they used books to learn about genealogy and the same percentage had attended courses to learn genealogical practices. Mostly these courses were general beginner courses offered by the AFHS and two took a course online. Only two genealogists mentioned the internet as a source for *how to do genealogy* information. The AFHS library and volunteers helped 18 percent of the informants get started, and the same number got help from the LDS centre. Others also said that specific people, mainly genealogists, had helped them to get started.

Several of my informants said that although they read books and took courses, the best way they found to learn how to pursue genealogical work was by simply doing it. Peggy Sinko and Scott Peters' study on the genealogists who use the Newberry Library found that most genealogists are self-taught, 69.4 percent thought this method was very important and only a quarter of them felt that the *how to do genealogy* books were important for learning about genealogy (1983:104). Their survey revealed that only 20 percent of the respondents felt that courses or workshops were important means of learning. Other people, friends and librarians were also rated as important resources by less than 20 percent of the genealogists questioned (ibid); the same result I found with my

informants. Two of my informants said that they had not engaged in any formal instruction to learn how to pursue genealogy.

In this regard, several of the informants also offer help to beginners and neophytes themselves. The professionals interviewed have all given talks, courses or have written articles and books on the subject. Beyond them, seven of the non-professional genealogists have also taught courses or given talks. This is not a rare occurrence, as Bidlack also notes that genealogists will write and lecture on areas of research in which they have become experts, such as the use of a certain form of record or the problems of dealing with the documents of a particular region (1983:13).

Another social aspect of genealogy is the many seminars and fairs offered. These events also provide a means of gathering information on conducting genealogical research. They are popular venues for interaction and learning. Only 24 percent of my informants had not been to any seminar, fair or FHS meeting. The majority of these people had just begun practicing genealogy and the others said they had no time to attend these events. The AFHS seminars are popular events, as 42 percent of the informants had attended them. The AFHS meetings are also well attended by the membership. Of those interviewed 27 percent said they attend such meetings regularly. A guest speaker at an AFHS meeting, who had come from the OGS, expressed his delight that the AFHS had so many of its members attend their meetings.

A caution must be noted about my analysis. It is easy to show the communal side of genealogy by indicating the high percentage of people who are members of societies and who attend seminars. However, this analysis is of genealogists who volunteered to be interviewed for my thesis. Those genealogists who pursue their interests on their own

do not attend seminars, are not members of a FHS and probably would not volunteer for a genealogical project. I was able to interview several people who are not members of any society and, notwithstanding their non-affiliations, they still expressed the importance of communicating with other genealogists to get answers to questions.

Sinko and Peters have taken note of this as well: “many genealogists are highly independent and still work outside the mainstream of organized genealogy” (1983:102). In fact, nearly half of their survey did not belong to any FHS, and 32 percent belonged to only one or two. In a year’s time 62.8 percent of those surveyed had not attended any genealogical seminar, fair or special program. This same survey did reveal that approximately 10 percent of the genealogists at the library are extremely active in this endeavour – they attend seminars, write and publish genealogical material, belong to several FHSs and teach courses (ibid).

FRIENDS and GENEALOGY

One of the questions posed to my informants was whether they had made any friends through their genealogical endeavours. Six of the informants said that they have “a lot of friends” whom they have met through their mutual interest in genealogy. Two informants had made friends with people who had joined them on a bus trip to Salt Lake City, which was organized through the AFHS. Another genealogist said that he had several “genpals”, as he called them. One genealogist’s comment about a friend was that it was their common interests that lead to a friendship.

Some informants said that they had genealogical acquaintances, some met through the AFHS, others met elsewhere. One genealogist told me that most of her

friends are genealogists now, as she got them involved in the activity. Another said that he has quite a few friends with common interests in both genealogy and computers. If they are not interested in computers, then he is not their friend. This informant loves genealogy for its computer aspects. One informant commented that quite a few of her friends pursue genealogy, and she has only found this out recently, as she has become involved in her own genealogy. When asked this question, two informants mentioned their cousin. In these cases their cousin has been instrumental in providing support and information about genealogy in general and the specifics on their family history.

The other part of this question asked whether the informant had influenced any of their friends to take up genealogy. Six of them said this had been the case, but also suggested that the interest had been there all along. Usually, to get a friend actively pursuing their genealogy there must be a shared underlying interest, as two informants got their friends “hooked” by helping them to start researching their family history.

Another informant told me that he has no genealogical friends and as such he bores his friends with any genealogical talk because they have no interest in family history. One informant gets angry with his friend, who is in possession of a lot of information about his family history and yet does not pursue his genealogy. This particular informant struggles to get every piece of information and feels that his friend, who has been handed a lengthy genealogy, should work on it.

One informant has captured the development of genealogical friends quite well. Her response to my question of whether she has genealogy friends or has influenced her friends to become genealogists is as follows:

Yes, I do. I'm not into making *all* my friends genealogists, I mean it's not really a mission for me to do that, but when I do mention that that is what I am interested in I have helped *a lot* of people get started and have encouraged lots of others. If nothing else I encourage people to not throw stuff out. If they are not interested, find somebody in their family who is to make sure it does not get lost. So I at least do that conserving message to almost everybody. It is not that I want it all myself, I just want to make sure that things that are of value to me stay with somebody who appreciates them.

Yes, I do have lots of friends who are genealogists. Some people I have known for years and years and years and they are friends at my genealogy meetings and the volunteer work I do. But others are personal friends, the ones who come for dinner, that sort of thing. So there are both. The bus trips to Salt Lake City are fun and I have met friends through them. These trips were good when I was working because it kept me focussed on my genealogy.

I have met great people who are doing their genealogy. It is a great support group. People come from all walks of life; the broad spectrum is what is really neat. Genealogists are generally friendly and helpful. There is a shared interest and that is a real plus. It is a neat way for people to get together and help each other out; there is great support there.

This informant has had a life-long interest in genealogy and now that she works part-time out of her home she is able to dedicate many hours to genealogy. She is a strong member in the AFHS, as she volunteers for several projects on a continual basis, teaches classes and, as she said, has many friends in the society.

Three informants indicated that they were introduced to genealogy through a friend. One of these informants is a neophyte and said that she could see herself making friends through their common genealogical interest. Four of the genealogists interviewed said that they had no genealogical friends and had not caused any friends to pursue genealogy.

SUMMARY

Not all genealogists use FHSs, as Sinko and Peters learned, however for those who do use them, the organizations provide research assistance and information as well as a means of socializing with other people who have the same interest. FHSs allow genealogists to express themselves to people who will not only listen, but can relate to the excitement and disappointments they feel. Many genealogists who are members of FHSs say that they want to give back to the society that has helped them get started with their family history or provided research assistance and often friendships. Volunteering for their FHS is a popular activity for these genealogists.

Genealogists are known for their friendliness and willingness to share information, and my Calgary research project seems to support this reputation. This is often translated into the countless mediums available for family historians to communicate with each other. Magazines, newsletters, online bulletin boards and mailing lists such as Dist-Gen allow genealogists to pose questions, answer queries and stay in contact with others in an efficient and often quick manner.

As genealogists are so willing to help one another out and to get novices started there are several options available for learning how to practice genealogy. Books on the subject abound, they can be specific or broad, but all will help the beginner sift through the information they have and need. FHSs, libraries, archives and now colleges and universities offer courses on genealogy for not only neophytes but for those who wish to become certified professional genealogists. Since genealogists love to share their knowledge, there are always volunteers or friends who will help a novice start their family history. There are also seminars all year around where neophyte or advance

genealogists can learn more about this pursuit. Although, there are all these various means for help, the most popular method to learn genealogy is by simply pursuing it.

Friendships are often created through this common interest and many are long lasting and meaningful. The enthusiasm so many genealogists express about their endeavour can influence their friends to the point that they become genealogists as well.

A strong genealogical social world exists that is ready to welcome anyone who is interested. There is no feeling of being a stranger when one enters the world of genealogy. The people are friendly and eager to help those in need and listen to those who want to share their stories.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW GENEALOGISTS CHARACTERIZE THEIR PURSUIT

In this chapter I present the genealogists' accounts for how they characterize themselves and their relationship to their genealogical activities. The issues raised here will help to explain why the pursuit of genealogy has become a popular activity in the civic-based society of the Western world.

The reasons given by genealogists for why they start and continue with their genealogical pursuits vary. However, there are some central themes mentioned by my informants and respondents. I will start this chapter by discussing the genealogists' accounts for what inspired them to start genealogy.

Genealogy can be a life long research project that usually has disappointments, as information cannot be found. However, on occasion something is found, a piece of the puzzle that has been needed for years. It is these times of success that many genealogists say the endeavour is worthwhile. But these discoveries are not very frequent, so why does a person continue to pursue this activity, which on the whole has more questions than it does answers? A serious genealogist has to be dedicated to this pursuit in order to continue the research in spite of running into "dead ends". How genealogists perceive their dedication will be reviewed in this chapter.

Along with the diligent collection of information, family heirlooms are also carefully preserved and displayed in the homes of genealogists. I will discuss the value and meaning genealogists say family artifacts have for them.

Beyond the inspiration to start and continue genealogy and the dedication required to see serious genealogists through times when information is not forthcoming, I

will explore my informants' perceived satisfaction and enjoyment they say they experience through their genealogical work.

INSPIRATION

When I asked what inspired the genealogists to start researching their family history, it caught many off guard. They had never really thought about why they pursue genealogy. Most people could come up with an answer, but they had to give it some thought, as it had never crossed their mind before. Like any other leisure activity, genealogists have to explain what they do to non-genealogists, but no one ever seemed to ask them *why* they do it.

After coming up with an answer to why they started genealogy many informants then said that they "were hooked after that" or that they got the "genealogy bug". These genealogists are referring to the interesting and frequent phenomenon that happens when one does start genealogy. Lambert also found these terms used as well as others, such as "disease" and "obsession", terms my informants also used (1995b:149). The one common aspect about genealogy seems to be that it is never finished. There is always information to find, need or that comes along. Most often this information only leads to more questions and the search is renewed.

There are many aspects of genealogy that one can get "hooked" to, from filling in pieces of a life story to learning the endless computer programs and information online. Many people like the detective work involved in genealogy, others like to hear the family stories and some like to work on the computer. The following will go through the informants' perceived inspirations to practice and continue with genealogy.

Curiosity

There are some main themes for pursuing genealogy that became apparent from discussions with my informants and respondents. Perhaps the most common is a general curiosity or interest in one's family history specifically and history in general. Nearly a quarter of the informants said that they have always had an interest in their family history. They stated that genealogy is a part of who they are and so it was only natural for them to do the work when the time was right in their life. Almost as many also said that with age they became curious to know about the family, some mentioned that they wanted to learn the unknown aspects of the family.

Genealogists often express a belief that there is a natural human desire to know about one's past (Fisher 2000:92). Many of my informants said that to know one-self you must first know where you came from and how it is that you are here today. One respondent, from Korea, said simply "family history is important for life". Others said they want to relate to and understand their ancestors on a personal level, to truly know why choices were made and any personality traits that may run in the family. These genealogists said this level of understanding often helps to explain their own actions.

One genealogist said she is a "learner" and it is a family trait to solve puzzles, so genealogy naturally fits into her personality. Many genealogists express that it is the hunt they are interested in; they enjoy the detective work and solving the puzzles (Erben 1991; Fisher 2000; Lambert 1996a).

Often finding information lead to the genealogical work of my informants. Success when looking for information or happening to come across a family connection in a book or on a trip were reasons given for starting genealogy. Several genealogists

said they got “hooked” when they were introduced to the various genealogical resources available for finding family information.

Family

Another common theme for pursuing genealogy appears to be family influence. Many informants said they started genealogy because their grandchildren, children or even parents wanted to know their family history. The informants were approached because they were thought to know the answers or that they might have been willing to find out. As mentioned in Chapter Six, most genealogists’ possess the required research skills to practice genealogy.

Several informants said that they want to preserve the knowledge of the family for the next generation. Others indicated that they had been given family history information from a cousin or another relative and this either intrigued them to learn more or that they found mistakes in it and they wanted to correct them.

A common inspiration mentioned by informants for an interest in genealogy is that they were raised hearing many stories about the family from grandparents and parents. These stories piqued their curiosity and they wanted to learn more. However, the opposite is also described, where the informant knew nothing of their family history or that there were secrets kept about family members and they wanted to learn more. This lack of knowing only made the informant curious and the search was on to find the family secrets. One informant said she wants to “prove or disprove the family tales that were passed down through the generations”.

Seeing old family photos and wanting to put a name to the face or know how they are related to the informant inspired several informants to work on their genealogy. The

family memorabilia in their possession has also piqued informants' curiosity to learn more about the person who made or was the original owner of the items.

Some informants said a journey to their ancestral homeland was what made them interested in pursuing genealogy. This familiarity with the ancient land often piques one's interest in their family history; many soldiers in the world wars of the Twentieth century expressed this interest. As the Canadians and Americans journeyed to their ancestral homelands, many became intrigued that their families had originated in that part of the world (Bidlack 1983:11).

Another reason given for starting genealogy was that the informants had attended a family reunion or anniversary. Meeting other family members doing their genealogy or seeing a family history book already completed had also been a trigger to start their own genealogy.

Mortality

Mortality is another reason mentioned by the informants for pursuing genealogy. Lambert found that genealogy is a comfort to those who have recently lost a close relative. In an interest to remember and preserve the memories of the deceased, genealogy seems to offer the means to do so (1995b:155). Three of my informants said they started genealogy after the death of a close relative. For one informant the death was the end of the family line and in an effort to preserve that line for future generations she decided to record the family history. Another informant, very spiritual in nature, told me that when she was twelve her grandfather died, and the next morning he came to her and told her to preserve and remember the family history. One genealogist was interested

in his family history but apart from recording stories told by his mother on one occasion he did not pursue the research until his mother had died.

An informant told me “an interest in family history comes as the irresponsible child turns into a responsible adult and one can see their impending death”. He said genealogy helps him to deal with his mortality, as he finds comfort knowing that so many ancestors went before him and that the family will continue after his death. Another genealogist said her dad encouraged his children to ask living relatives what they knew before they die and the information is lost forever. She said it was also a way to keep the living family in touch.

Other Inspirations

Obligation can be a strong factor to get people started on their genealogy. Several informants told me that they had many boxes of family information and felt that they should do something with them. One informant even said he felt guilty for just letting the boxes collect dust in his basement. He said that because he is a writer and researcher, his family members felt he should have the family documents.

Medical reasons can also cause a person to look into their family history or to record it. One informant has epilepsy and wants her descendants to know the medical history of her family. The mother of a respondent died from ALS and he wanted to look into the family’s medical history. Another genealogist has chronic fatigue, and as there is no cure he is looking into his family history to see if anything is genetic.

The Korean respondent said that genealogy is part of their religion and family upbringing. She expressed that it is important to know your ancestors, so that they may be honoured and family connections will be maintained. The only other informant to

mention religion as a reason for practicing genealogy has a Mennonite heritage. This genealogist shared with me that Mennonites pass family genealogies on to the next generation orally and these connections are used in daily life. It is important to know who is connected to whom so intermarriages will be prevented. How people relate to each other is also determined in part by family membership. These two people were the only ones to mention religion as a reason to pursue genealogy. Lambert also found little reference to religion as an inspiration to engage in genealogical research. Of course he pointed out that if he studied a Mormon group of genealogists, the results would be different (1995b:155).

DEDICATION

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the motivation a person has to start and continue with an activity expresses itself in terms of internal commitments the person then establishes towards the task. In terms of genealogy, these internal commitments can be measured by how the person perceives her or his level of dedication to genealogy and whether that dedication changes over time. The level of dedication one gives to genealogy can vary depending on the person's interest and experience in this activity.

The following will examine the terms used by informants to describe their dedication. It will be accompanied by a quantitative analysis of where the informants placed themselves on a scale in terms of their dedication to the pursuit of genealogy. The informants were first asked to give a term for their dedication and then to plot that dedication on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is no interest, 5 is a hobby and 10 is a fanatic.

Novices

The neophyte genealogists I spoke to generally used the term “hobby” to describe their dedication. These informants said they have a “minimum dedication”, but a “real interest”, and one said genealogy is a “hobby that I do for fun”. A couple of these genealogists said they lack the time, not the interest, to work on their genealogy as frequently as they would like. They commented that genealogy could become like a job, if it was all they did in life. One informant said, “if I did do it all the time than I would begin to resent it because it would start to feel like work”.

These neophytes placed themselves anywhere between a 4 and a 7 on the scale. Some added that they would be higher on the scale if they were able to give more time to their research. One informant who used the term “hobby” said when she retires she hopes to pursue genealogy more, as the hours spent at work she will then spend on genealogy and at that time it may become more to her than just a hobby.

Two other neophyte genealogists interviewed felt more dedicated to the pursuit. One said his dedication is somewhere in between a hobby and an obsession. At the time of the interview he was busy trying to sort out all the family documents given to him. With this immediate project in mind he placed himself at a 9.5 on the scale saying, “I am almost a fanatic as I try to sort out the paperwork”. The last neophyte interviewed would like to become a professional genealogist but says she is “not obsessive about genealogy”. She put herself at a 7.5 on the scale, and holds that there are still other things in life besides genealogy.

Experienced

The experienced genealogists interviewed vary in their responses for a term for their dedication, but generally they appear more dedicated than the neophytes. Only three of the nineteen experienced genealogists used the term “hobby” but they also added adjectives to the term, such as “moderate” or that genealogy is a “very interesting hobby”, and one said his pursuit of genealogy was a “passionate hobby”. Although they used the term “hobby” to describe their level of dedication, these genealogists placed themselves higher than a 5 on the scale, and one said he was at an 8+.

One informant said genealogy is an “interest” and a “curiosity” for him and only placed himself at a 2 on the scale. Another said it is an “extreme interest” for her and thinks she is at a 7 or 8 on the scale. One genealogist placed herself at a 10.5 on the scale but said she is not a “fanatic” just “thoroughly interested”.

One genealogist said she is “very dedicated” to genealogy as there have been many times when she has wanted to quite as nothing was found, but then information came her way. She placed herself at a 9 or a 10 on the scale, although her husband says she is at a 12. She also said the work is a “passion and an obsession”.

Several other informants used the term “obsession”. One such informant stated that she has been interested in genealogy all her life and said, “I find that other interests in my life relate to genealogy, it seems to be unlimited”. She placed herself at a 9.5 on the scale. Another genealogist said her dedication was a “retired obsession” when she began as she was spending so much time on the research and taking a course. She added that she does not spend as much time on it now so it is no longer an obsession but the curiosity is still there. She said that she floats between 3 and 7 on the scale depending on

the time she spends on the research. One informant describes her dedication as an “incurable obsession” and says there is no end to genealogy. She also said she is “fanatical” and could never see herself not being interested in genealogy. She placed herself “at least at a 9” on the scale.

One genealogist describes her dedication as being a “passion” as she is tenacious about her research. Without hesitation she said she is a 10 on the scale, stating, “I am a fanatic and totally immersed in my pursuit for genealogical information”.

Three other genealogists described their dedication to genealogy as a “disease” and an “addiction” and they placed themselves at an 8 on the scale. One described being kept awake at night, as she could not stop thinking about the family history book she was writing. A couple that practice genealogy together used the term “addiction”, saying, “once one starts genealogy they cannot stop”.

Professionals

The professional genealogists interviewed used very similar terms to the experienced genealogists. However, on the whole, their phrasing was more committed than those of the experienced genealogists. One professional said her dedication is “consummate and [she] is totally obsessed with genealogy, there is no doubt, [she] is a 10 on the scale”. Another professional described her dedication as being “obsessive compulsive”. She finds the work to be “very addictive” as she will suffer from withdraw when she is not working on genealogy. She too, placed herself at a 10 on the scale.

Dedication and Time

One genealogist stated that there is a difference between interest and dedication. She said that at the present time she still has a high interest in genealogy but her

dedication to the work is low at this point. However, she then said that her dedication is high; it is just not active. For this informant, genealogy is more than just a hobby, “it is a living changing thing that never finishes”. This informant had completed a family history for a reunion and at the time of the interview was not actively researching her genealogy. Like so many other informants, she seems to equate time spent on genealogy with her level of dedication to the pursuit.

During the interview process, I was careful not to bring time in as a factor for determining dedication. In the original question I did use hours spent on genealogy as a way to set the scale the informants were to use to plot their level of dedication. However, during the initial interviews I did not refer to hours spent on genealogy as a way for them to determine where they were on the scale. It was quickly revealed that the informants were using time as a means of measuring their level of dedication all on their own. This immediately fascinated me because they were independently using the same method to measure dedication as I had done in my original question design. In the subsequent interviews I was careful not to equate dedication with time, as I wanted to see if the informants would make that equation on their own.

A third of the informants did determine their level of dedication based on the amount of time they could spend on it. Several of these informants said they would be more dedicated to genealogy if they had more time to work on it. Beyond a simple measure of time spent on genealogy, these informants expressed that if more time is dedicated to their family history then they would “get into it more” and enjoy it more. Four genealogists determined the opposite, that even though time spent on genealogy decreases or varies, one’s dedication to the pursuit does not change as well.

Change in Dedication

This brings us to the final question posed to the informants about their dedication to genealogy. They were asked whether they felt there is any change to their dedication. The neophyte genealogists said they did expect their dedication to change; it should get higher as they become increasingly interested in the research and especially when new material is found or a strong lead is discovered. One novice said other life events might cause her to become more dedicated to the work, such as the death of a relative. Another said her dedication was initially high when she started the project as all the information was new to her and she was busy sorting out the documents. Other genealogists, both neophytes and experienced ones, said their dedication was initially high but had tapered off after a while. Only one novice genealogist said his dedication to genealogy would not change.

Eleven of the experienced genealogists stated that their dedication has changed and nine say that it is constant. One genealogist who said her dedication has increased added that the change is caused by what she learns about her ancestors and herself. She stated that her dedication grows as she learns more, because she wants to put people into place and context. According to her, genealogists learn more about themselves as people when they research their ancestors lives, and this new awareness makes the person more dedicated to their genealogical pursuits. Another informant also said her dedication has become stronger and more serious as she has learned things and talked to people.

One genealogist said his level of dedication initially went up and then reached a plateau and believes that it will then decline as the incoming information declines. He says he spends more time on genealogy now and gets less information. The lack of

information made him feel that his dedication to his genealogy had gone down as well, but it seems to me that his dedication has actually increased, as he is willing to put in more time for fewer results. Another informant also said her dedication will decrease with the lack of information, but added that it is due to a loss of interest and frustration as time is spent and nothing is accomplished. However, this informant did say that when she runs into a dead end, she simply goes down another path of research so that she does not get discouraged and continues the work. Other genealogists have also mentioned this and they will simply shift their focus when nothing is found. However, there are some who will stop the endeavour all together, which is what happened to one of my informants.

Almost as many experienced genealogists indicated that their dedication to genealogy does not change. To these informants dedication is not based on the amount of time spent or information gathered. There appears to be an underlying commitment to their genealogical endeavour that does not shift with the highs and lows of the research. Several of these informants said that other daily events and circumstances, such as family responsibilities and a lack of spending money, may prevent them from working on their genealogy but their dedication to it does not change.

All of the professional genealogists interviewed stated that their dedication to genealogy has not changed. These professionals have embraced genealogy not only as a career but also as a way of life. They say they enjoy the constant learning curve they are on as new pieces of the past are revealed to them. They also express great satisfaction in helping others discover their ancestors and the details of those lives. These genealogists say they love what they do as a career and see no end in sight.

FAMILY ARTIFACTS

When trying to label her dedication to her genealogical work, an informant said, “the collection of artifacts and information is not just a hobby”. There appears to be an underlying meaning attached to family artifacts as each generation has carefully preserved them and passed them down to the next generation. One informant summed up this emotional attachment by saying “I have to have the things that belonged to the family, as they have sentimental value and meaning to me”. Another genealogist said it is important to preserve those items made by family members, rather than those things they happened to own, as a form of documenting the details of her ancestors lives. An informant said looking at these old things is like a type of therapy for her, because they are so far from what is familiar that it takes her out of present day reality.

One genealogist has a house full of family heirlooms, consisting of furniture, silverware, quilts and pictures, but what she commented on was the small diary of her great-grandmother, written when she was an adolescent. The genealogist read this diary when she was an adolescent herself and she said it made her realize that people then are the same as they are today. They had problems, life was not perfect and it made her feel normal to be going through the uncertainty she was experiencing as an adolescent, ~~because her great-grandmother had been through the same issues.~~ Rachel Fisher, through a study on genealogy and Jewish identity, discovered that although a genealogist can be nostalgic about the past, they do not often see the past as being better or purer than the present, “because the detailed knowledge it produces resists such a romanticized view” (2000:272).

Only one genealogist said he is not interested in collecting things. All the others vary in the amount of items they have, but they all seem to cherish what they do have, whether it is a house full of artifacts or only a few photographs handed down through the generations. Many informants have their family heirlooms displayed in curio cabinets or in memory boxes and have pictures of ancestors hung on the walls in their home.

Genealogists in Calgary perhaps do not have as many family items as genealogists in Eastern Canada or those in Europe, as many of my informants indicated that the family does have a lot of artifacts but they are in Ontario or England. Some genealogists said that their family moved around a lot and were not particularly wealthy so possessions were not collected; or they came to Canada as farmers and so only brought the bare necessities and a few treasured pieces.

Family photographs are easy to transport and to keep in the family, as such all but two of the informants said they have ancestral pictures. In many cases, it is all they have along with the family documents. Many of the informants have gone to the expense of restoring and hanging their family photos in their homes. One genealogist expressed the enjoyment she gets from looking at the photos and said her grandchildren also like to ~~look at them and it gets them interested in their family history.~~ Another informant pointed out that looking at the old pictures made her realize the importance of not only taking pictures but also documenting them. She felt that it was so important that she journeyed to her brother's home in Edmonton to take pictures of the current relatives.

Beyond restoring and displaying their family artifacts, several of the genealogists have also documented and digitally photographed all their heirlooms in an effort to preserve them.

SATISFACTION

Genealogy can be a time consuming and expensive endeavour that can have negative effects on family life, as it can interfere with daily activities and travel plans. However, the genealogists I interviewed seemed to focus on the satisfaction they experience from pursuing their family history. As mentioned above, there is a freedom of entrance with leisure activities (Shamir 1988:251). This implies that if a person does not enjoy the leisure activity they participate in, than they are free to stop the activity.

Nearly 70 percent of my informants said they simply enjoy the work involved in genealogy. They find on the whole, the pursuit of genealogy to be satisfying, rewarding and fulfilling.

Beyond simply enjoying the work, many genealogists find genealogy to be exciting and interesting as they uncover historic information on not only their ancestors but on social events of the past as well. One third of the informants indicated that they ~~enjoy learning history. Seeing events through the eyes of their ancestors makes the~~ events more personal and “come alive”. Several genealogists expressed their newfound appreciation for historical events because they mean more to them now that they know someone who participated in the event or was directly affected by it.

A common response from a third of my informants is that they enjoy the detective work, putting the puzzle together and learning the truth behind the family stories. Lambert found that 46 percent of his survey said they liked to solve puzzles (1995b:150).

Another popular answer given about the satisfaction experienced from practicing genealogy is that many have acquired a sense of accomplishment through writing or compiling their family history. Their genealogical work has given them confidence in their own abilities and independence as they prove to themselves that they can complete a project on their own. As mentioned before, genealogy never really ends, but there are milestones within the work as a person publishes a book or completes the lineage for one family. Of the genealogists interviewed, 27 percent mentioned these feelings they get from pursuing genealogy. It was the women who listed these, as opposed to the men.

Many informants also told me that their genealogical work provides meaning to their life, as it gives them a task they perceive to be valuable to their future relatives. Other informants shared the enjoyment they feel from helping others research their genealogy. Some genealogists like the fact that it keeps them busy in their retirement years. Others say they enjoy meeting distant relatives and other genealogists through ~~their research endeavours. One couple said they like genealogy because it is an interest~~ they can share together. A few informants also said they enjoy learning about people's lives, one said she "tries to put herself into her ancestors' shoes". Another genealogist said her genealogy is a "stress reliever at times as it is a form of escape from the troubles of present day life".

SUMMARY

There are many inspirations mentioned by my informants for why they pursue genealogy, from basic human curiosity to a sense of impending death. Some feel obligated to sort through the family documents, while others want to fill in the gaps in family stories.

Neophyte genealogists generally have a lesser sense of dedication to their pursuit, as many referred to genealogy as a “hobby”. As experience is gained through researching their family history the “hobby” turns into a “passion” or even a “disease” or “addiction”. For those who choose to make genealogy their full-time career their dedication is immense, often described as an “obsession”.

How a person perceives the change to their dedication also coincides with their level of experience. From novice genealogists who generally feel that their dedication will change in the future, as it is linked to the amount of time they spend on it and the information that is available, to experienced genealogists who feel that their dedication remains the same despite the variability in the time spent on their family history and the information gathered.

Family memorabilia that is preserved and passed on to the next generation is an excellent visual aid for one's genealogical pursuits. Genealogists tend to love the stories and general information they learn about their ancestors, but many express a special attachment they have towards artifacts they can hold and see. The care taken to preserve the various items speaks to the dedication a genealogist has to their pursuit of family history.

The most common satisfaction my informants say they experience through pursuing their family history is that they simply enjoy the work. Most of the informants also enjoy learning the historical context that surrounded their ancestors. Some develop a new sense of accomplishment and independence as they complete a genealogical project. Others feel honoured to be leaving the legacy of the family history for future generations. Some like the social aspects genealogy has brought to their lives; such as meeting distant relatives and helping others pursue their genealogy.

CHAPTER NINE**LIFE IMPACT**

To begin on a personal note, when I started doing my own genealogy, the family and social history I was learning had a transformative impact on my view of the world and on my view of my place in that world, this in turn affected aspects of my personal identity. I now know how my family came to Canada and where we had lived before. I learned about the role my ancestors played in social events such as the migration of Huguenots from France, the American Revolution and the building of Canada. Beyond my new role as family historian in the family, I also felt connected to my ancestors and to the society I live in.

The vast majority of those who become “hooked” on genealogy report similar experiences. As many genealogists have told me in the course of this thesis, remote historical events become more real and relevant as one learns the personal stories of ancestors who participated in them. The main question I had for my research was: how does genealogy affect other people’s view of the world, and how does it impact their life? After speaking with thirty-three genealogists of varying degrees of experience I can state that all but one give accounts which reveal that they have been affected by their own genealogy in ways similar to my own experience. In this chapter I will explore this ~~question further and focus on the ways in which genealogy has impacted the informants’~~ lives.

Before I discuss the genealogists’ own thoughts on how their view of the world has changed because of their pursuit of genealogy, I will begin with a look at how genealogy can affect personal identity. In the post-modern era of the Western world it is normal and even expected that an individual will construct their personal identity based

on the influences around them and their own interests and experiences they have in life (Harvey 1990:5). Some scholars speak to the identity genealogy creates for a person who practices it. Ronald Lambert uses the term the *family historian role* to describe the position a genealogist takes on as they study and document their family history (1995b:153). Other scholars highlight the new notions of the self as one learns about their ancestors and how this new identity has given them a new purpose in their life.

Finally, I will examine how genealogy has influenced the career choices of my informants, and how the pursuit of genealogy has changed or influenced the informants' families and other activities.

IDENTITY

Family Historian Role

The pursuit of genealogy can be more than a hobby as it often involves a change in the person's role in the family and their own identity. Lambert has developed the notion of the *family historian role* (1996a:11). There are five components to this role:

researcher (searching for information about ancestors),
archivist (preservation of family artifacts), registrar
(recording information on the living family), chronicler
(sharing information about the family with the family) and
identity (seeing oneself as a family historian) (ibid).

Lambert found that the most important component of the family historian role was that of researcher (ibid:15). I have discussed the notion that many genealogists seem to like to play the role of detective and that it is the search for information that many find enjoyable. An archivist, according to Lambert, is to "preserve endangered family records" (ibid:12) and a chronicler wants to share what they know about the family with

the future generations (ibid:13). I have also reviewed how artifacts are collected and preserved and that genealogists often want to share what they have learned with other family members and to leave the information as a legacy for the next generation.

Lambert's component of registrar is similar to another term, that of *kin-keeper*. This term is used in reference to a person who tracks living relatives in terms of vital statistics and other important family events in an effort to sustain kin networks (Hatt 1997:103). Lambert found that a family historian may feel obligated to also record the births, marriages and deaths of living relatives (ibid:13). Several of the genealogists I interviewed feel it is their duty to record such dates for the future, as they often hope and assume that there will be a genealogist in the next generation.

Lambert's last component of a family historian role, identity, refers to the genealogist's self-conceptions as a family historian. Lambert found that some of his respondents attached prestige to their role as family historian, "serving as the custodian for family artifacts, and being seen by family members as authorities on their families" (ibid:14).

Although my informants are not all custodians for the family artifacts, many did say they are the family historians for the family and that relatives come to them for information on their ancestors. Many informants were proud of this role and enjoyed being able to tell their interested relatives about their common ancestors. Lambert found that the family historian role "offered a respected position within the family structure and thus contributed to their personal identity and self-esteem" (1996b:126). Several of my informants also spoke to this position within the family. For many it brought them closer to distant relatives, and at family reunions they are often the centre of attention as the

relatives are interested in what they have learned. Several informants were proud and happy that their grandchildren will now come to them and ask about their genealogy, often it is for a school project but the grandchildren are still coming to talk to the authority on the subject and that makes them feel that their work has an important function within the family.

Self-Identity

Beyond the identity of being the family historian many genealogists feel that their own self-identity has been changed by what they have learned through their research into the lives of their ancestors. "If one believes that genes make a difference, it follows that research into the lives of one's ancestors can bring a better understanding of oneself" (Bidlack 1983:7). Several of my informants believe that everyone has a desire to know their roots, as it explains who they are and where they have come from. Forty-five percent of my informants said genealogy gives them a sense of belonging in a family as well as in society. Many talk about finding a place in history as they learn how their ancestors, in their own way, helped to shape the world they now live in.

For others, genealogy also explains personality traits, as they "see themselves" in their ancestors. Twenty-one percent of the informants stated that knowing where these traits originated helps to not only explain them but to embrace them as well. Through learning the biographies of their ancestors, many characteristics, attitudes, sympathies and inclinations are revealed to the genealogists as being those they hold themselves. Perhaps we might speculate that the genealogists are symbolically constructing their own identities by selectively sifting through their ancestors; however in their idiom, these

traits of character and attitudes take the form of “discoveries”, which explain their own deepest beliefs and sentiments.

The archivist at the National Genealogical Society in Arlington, Virginia, Dereka Langhans, says “through genealogy, we get to put ourselves into context” (Langhans in Asch 1998). Langhans argues that as we become adults we begin to understand ourselves as a member of the human race and believes that children could lessen their feelings of isolation and alienation if they saw themselves as part of humanity’s lineage (ibid).

The history learned through genealogy is personal and ordinary. Neophyte genealogists are told not to try to create a pedigree from a famous person in history, as they will only be disappointed (A. Baxter 1984:2). A common notion is “that genealogists seek to embellish their lives through illustrious ancestors” (Lambert 1995b:154). However, people today are excited to learn about the life of an average person, who had to travel in steerage to come to the New World or was the “black sheep” in the family (Phalon 1991: 122).

Elizabeth Nickson points out that it is the life of the average person that makes history come alive for people today, as it is harder to judge and condemn ancestors for their actions. She says that people are “sick of having themselves defined by Hollywood, ~~official government culture, and a literary elite bent on converting us into something we~~ don’t want to be” (2001). Genealogy, to Nickson, is the only means to save our history from becoming the product of political agendas (ibid). To sum it up, “an ordinary person or family can discover an extraordinary heritage through genealogy” (Shinkoskey 1995:87).

VIEW of the WORLD

In answering my question about how genealogy has impacted their view of life and their place in the world, the genealogists repeatedly alluded to their emotions and how they are connected to their family, ethnic heritage and homeland, and history in general.

Family Connections

Many genealogists said they have a new appreciation for the struggles their ancestors had to endure and this often results in them understanding and respecting their ancestors as real people. One informant said that she “now understands that life is not as simple as history books make it appear”. Life is complicated, and the factors that lead to a life changing decision are varied. She thinks this has made her more tolerant of people and has also made her appreciate her own life more. Many other genealogists also said that through their new understanding of the struggles of their ancestors, they had gained an “appreciation for their own life” and how their “struggles seem to be minor in comparison to the challenges faced by their ancestors”.

The lessons learned through genealogy can be said to have given many people a new perspective on life. Some indicated that they now see themselves as part of a family line, which comes from the past, exists in the present and which also extends into the future. One genealogist said now that she knows her ancestors it has brought them closer to her and has put them into perspective in terms of her own life and how she fits into the family.

Several genealogists spoke of a “connection” that they felt to their family, past and present, and the concept of family itself becomes enlarged. A novice genealogist

said she had always thought she belonged to a small family until she started working on her genealogy and quickly learned “that there is a big circle of relatives out there”. She no longer sees herself as a single entity. She shared a saying: “children take forward into the world a part of you that can’t go”. It was interesting to this informant to think that she knew her grandparents, parents, her siblings, children and grandchildren; yet her grandchildren do not know her grandparents. She said, “it is awesome to see how people are interconnected and connected to each other.”

Another informant had also previously believed she came from a small family until she started working on her genealogy. For her genealogy is seen as “humbling” because she has come to see herself as just one individual in a long line of relatives. Seeing how the people are all connected has given her a broader view of the world and her place in it. For some genealogists, this sense of connectedness helps them to deal with their own impending death, as they feel that they are less alone and part of an ongoing flow of life.

A common feeling, expressed by one informant, is that “past deeds affect the future of the family”. This sentiment is also felt in more profound and humbling ways as genealogists convey the “awe” they feel when they think that certain people had to meet ~~and make certain choices to lead to themselves being alive today.~~ For some this revelation has given more meaning to their life as they are seen as part of a lineage and that their actions and choices will affect the future as well.

One informant said “the pleasure from doing genealogy is reinforced when my niece calls me for family information for a school project and there is a general family interest in what I do”. This seems to hint at the notion of connectedness and a sense of

belonging as the older generation can pass on the connections to the next generation and that feeling of belonging to a larger group is extended to the younger generation. A genealogist also said that as she learns about her ancestors she wants to learn more. The life stories begin to have meaning to her and she wants to explore more of these stories.

Ethnic Connections

Many of the informants told me that they have a new appreciation for their ethnic identity and now embrace traditional ceremonies because of what they have learned as a genealogist.

Rachel Fisher's study on genealogy and how it affects one's Jewish identity found that genealogy can strengthen a person's inherited identity, that which is considered to be "in the blood" (2000:268). Many of Fisher's informants told her that they had found comfort in re-establishing their Jewish identity, as they became more active in the religious practices and by accepting and knowing the history of the Jews (ibid:292). According to Fisher, Jewish identity stems from genealogy; one is born a Jew and will always be a Jew. In this sense "genealogy is a way of knowing those people who had a role in determining who one is, and who one's children will be, regardless of one's volition" (ibid:287).

Elizabeth Grubgeld also found this to be true of those seeking to find their Irish national identity through their family history, as genealogy can be used to affirm the social status of the family or the individual. Grubgeld argued that family histories today often speak of displacement, the loss of language, religion and traditional ways. "Yet we seek origins as an antidote to a homogeneous identity as the products of mass culture,

and, as well, to feel ourselves more than the sum of a present moment, to give ourselves significances as the outcome of our ancestors' struggles" (1999:113).

When Robert Shinkoskey learned of his Mennonite heritage it made him "feel a part of a much larger community than [his] own small neighbourhood located in the present day" (1995:56). As he learned about his ancestors' struggles to immigrate to America, he began to feel like a benefactor of the incredible investment his ancestors had made to come to the New World. His newfound knowledge gave him a sense of pride in being an American, a place where his ancestors found the religious and political freedom they desired. The stories of the hardships his ancestors had to endure to build a successful life in a strange new land gave Shinkoskey confidence that he could also "raise a family and live with a sense of pride and independence as [his] kin had done before [him]" (ibid:84). As well, learning the national histories of his ancestral homelands in Europe and Asia has given him the desire to study foreign languages and to expose his children to them.

A couple of my informants expressed a sense of "pride" they have in their heritage. One genealogist wanted to teach his daughters about their Metis heritage. "So many Metis hide their identity for so long, trying to pass for White or Latino. There were many lost connections as people would not talk about their heritage or threw things away that related to being Metis." This genealogist wanted to instil a sense of pride in his daughters regarding their Metis history. Finding the stories of the struggles their Metis ancestors had to endure brought pride and recognition of being Metis back into the family.

The other informant felt that her Ukrainian heritage had always been downplayed in the family and her Irish heritage had been the focus when she was growing up. Learning the personal stories and struggles have made her admire the qualities of being Ukrainian, as she sees them as being hard working people. She can now be proud of that heritage.

Connections to Land and History

Many genealogists also expressed feelings of connectedness to the land and to history. Several informants indicated a desire to travel to their ancestral homelands so that they can “smell the air, touch the soil and see the colours” that their ancestors once did. The genealogists say that they would feel closer to their ancestors and understand them better if they took this journey. Forty-five percent of the informants have taken trips to their ancestral homeland, whether that was in Europe, Eastern Canada or the United States.

Other informants spoke of a connection to history they now have as a result of what they have learned through their family history. As ancestors become real people when the details of their lives are revealed, so too is history as social and economic events are seen in a new light. In particular, the themes of struggle and determination are stressed. The privations and challenges their ancestors had to endure because of the situation around them, and their struggles to overcome these challenges, explain those historical events in a personalized way, totally different from the abstractions of ordinary historical narrative.

As mentioned above, only one informant said that genealogy did not have any impact on his life. He presented himself as simply enjoying the work, and that he likes to play detective, but sees no profound meaning in his work.

CAREER INFLUENCE

Fifteen of the thirty-three genealogists interviewed started genealogy after they had retired or semi-retired from their careers and as such genealogy has had no impact on their career. Genealogy has influenced only three of the men's careers. One of them has become a professional genealogist. Another genealogist had started genealogy in his retirement, however, it turned into a paying part-time job when he started to critique and give presentations on the various genealogical computer software programs available in North America. Also in his retirement, Geoff, the Metis Researcher at the Glenbow Archives, started to volunteer at the archives because he was there so much of the time anyway; this led to him becoming a valued and stable resource for people in search of their Metis or First Nations heritage. Although this is a volunteer position for Geoff, he spends most of his days working on Metis genealogy, from conducting research for others, writing a newsletter and compiling information.

Three of the twenty-two women interviewed have made the pursuit of genealogy part of their careers. One woman has made it her full-time occupation and the other two are professional genealogists along with other careers. One of these professionals also works as a Knowledge Manager, based out of her home, she teaches organizations and people how to gain and manage their knowledge. The other professional is also a web page designer and works for The City of Calgary conducting research on social trends.

For these women genealogy was an interest in their lives before they became professionals.

Where the professional men express notions of wanting to promote the field of genealogy and share the knowledge they have with others, the women became professionals because of their own interest in the subject and saw an opportunity to not only do what they enjoyed but to also make a living from it.

Four other women interviewed work in other occupations but said that they want to become professional genealogists. Three of these women are interested in making a career out of genealogy but feel that the education required is too costly or time consuming. The other woman would like to become professional and is now looking into the requirements to become certified. She is comfortable in her current job working for the Alberta Heritage Fund for Medical Research as she feels that it is similar to genealogy in that she must record genetic family histories. She also said that genealogy has made her realize what her strengths and weaknesses are in terms of skills and interests.

Even if it did not directly affect their careers, several women said that genealogy did impact aspects of their jobs. One woman said that genealogy is similar to her job, as she researches names and places, and that the habits of precision and attention to small details required by genealogy has helped her become more organized in keeping the paper trail sorted. Another genealogist said that she does not want to become a professional genealogist, however, her interest in family history has made her consider becoming a historian, archaeologist or anthropologist, but these degrees would be costly and she does not feel that she would find a job in her related field.

For one woman, genealogy was stated to have given her life a kind of “balance”. She did not want her career to become the only thing she did in life. Genealogy allowed her to see that her career, money and even her family was not everything in life. Two years prior to my interview with her, she left her job as an accountant in the oil industry and became a bookkeeper working from home giving her more time to pursue her genealogy.

Genealogy had not impacted the current careers of two of the female neophyte genealogists in the sample. One wishes to pursue a career teaching children how to deal with the different sources of media. The other genealogist is a daycare provider, however, she felt that her new interest in genealogy might impact future choices she makes in her life.

IMPACT on FAMILY and OTHER ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in Chapter Four, I found it difficult to arrange interviews with family members of genealogists to get a sense of their take on the genealogical work of another family member. I was only able to speak to two sisters alone about their father’s genealogical work. Six other family members were interviewed together with the genealogists, and when the family was not available I had to ask the genealogists what they thought the impact was on the family. As a result, the answers given are often polite and seen in a good light as the genealogist hopes that their family at least has an interest in what they do. Of course, many of the informants are retired and their children are now adults so there is no impact on their daily lives.

This said, the impact of the informants' genealogical work on their family and any other activities they do seems to be minimal. For the most part the genealogists said that they still pursue other things in their lives beside genealogy. One informant indicated that other activities get in the way of her genealogy and another said that her family life had an impact on her genealogical interests.

Genealogy work does impact upon the family and other activities when there is a large project at hand, such as writing a book or sorting through a mass of newly found family documents. A recurring comment from genealogists who had this experience was that dinner was not made or it was always late; it was particularly the women who would mention this problem. Two other informants, who were in the process of sorting out boxes of family documents at the time of their interview, said that genealogy had "taken over their lives" and had prevented them from doing other activities.

Those genealogists who are not in the midst of a large project varied in how much of an impact they felt genealogy had on their lives. Some said, "life happens, so genealogy cannot be done all the time, there are other things to do". Many informants were quite clear that genealogy did not get in the way of their other interests and family. In many cases their interests have influenced the destinations of family vacations, so that they always involve family history in some manner.

Although family members appear to be supportive of the interests of the genealogist, not all of them like it. A couple of informants told me that their husbands are jealous of the time genealogy takes away from them being with their wife. One husband said that at first he was jealous of his wife's "dead people's society", but over time he learned that it was a genuine passion for her and, once he came to realize how

deeply committed she was, he became more supportive of her, while she in turn came to be supportive of his passions. Now the two can pursue their own interests without having to feel guilty about not spending so much time with the other. Several other genealogists expressed similar situations they had with their spouse. Each have their own interests and are able to pursue them with the support of the other.

I met the wife of a genealogist whose husband stated that she was bored with genealogy talk. However, in talking to her I learned that she is actually quite interested in her family history. What bores her is the computer aspect of genealogy, and for her husband that is what genealogy is all about. He is the genealogist who came out of retirement to write critiques on the various genealogical software programs. The couple have developed a system where he works quietly in his basement office all day and promptly at 3:30, after his wife watches "Coronation Street", they enjoy a leisurely cup of tea together.

There are couples that both find genealogy interesting and indicated during their interview that they enjoy having a common interest. These couples are now retired and one woman said that there was not much time in their lives for any avocations while their children were young, but now that they have moved out of the home the couple has the opportunity to pursue their own interests and sharing one together has had a positive influence on their relationship. One couple said that it brought "balance" to their lives, because while they have their own individual interests, genealogy brings them together on a regular basis so that they are not off doing there own thing all the time.

Often the husband gets involved in genealogy because he started by helping his wife do research. Sometimes the wife is very eager for the husband to become an active

genealogist, on occasion this works, other times the husband is happier on the golf course.

One genealogist said that when her children were young, her husband often had to take care of them when she was working on her family history. Many mothers said that because the majority of genealogy is done at the home, they are still able to care for their children. Two professional genealogists indicated that, at busy times they hire their daughters and grandchildren to help with research. These children are willing to do so; they most likely welcome the extra cash.

The two sisters interviewed said that their father's genealogy work does not affect their daily lives. Their dad is "always on the computer" and he will tell stories about what he has discovered in his research at dinner that they politely listen to, but generally his work does not affect them. Their father is interested in contacting distant relatives and wants his daughters to be interested in meeting them as well. However, they have no interest in meeting these people and avoid suggestions from their dad to get in contact with these relatives. Both of the sisters said that later in life they would probably be more interested in genealogy. For now they have no desire to pursue genealogy but feel that the work their father has done has given them a greater sense of belonging to an extended family they did not know existed and they also feel a sense of connection to the past.

A few genealogists said that the extended family is now closer because of their work on the family history. One informant said that she sent out letters to family members asking for family stories and information. She got a "great response" and even her sister, who had not spoken to her in years, sent a long letter full of information. This

exchange of letters appears to have led to a series of regular family reunions, which now take place every five years.

Several other genealogists indicated that their genealogical work has made them the centre of attention at family reunions. As relatives learn of the work the genealogist is doing, they want to know what has been discovered. Some want to add information and others want to get information. One informant said that she is now closer to her brother and father because of the work she is doing on her father's family. However, this has also resulted in her losing touch with her mother, as she has not worked on her mother's family history. A neophyte genealogist feels that her interest in family history might make family relations better as it will open the lines of communication. She believes that through the interest she shows in their lives and what they know about the family, they will in turn show interest in the information she will learn.

A life long genealogist warned her husband before they married of her interest and that it would involve vacations to ancestral homelands. Her husband is supportive of her work but is not too interested in it. Her children do appreciate the family artifacts around the house, but only have a passing interest in the family history.

Generally, family members are supportive of the family historian. The majority of them show an interest in the stories learned or the artifacts collected but they have no desire or time to do the work themselves. However, one genealogists' family will not volunteer any information and six other genealogists mentioned that some members of their family have no interest in the family history at all.

Many family members have taken up genealogy because of their relative's interest in the topic. Often it is the spouse of the family historian, other times it is a

cousin, brother-in-law and on occasion it is their own children. Most genealogists indicated that their children would probably show an interest in the finished product or when they are older in life. One genealogist points out that often the birth of children will spark interest in one's family history. It is why she started genealogy and believes it is why her son now shows an interest, as he has just had his first child.

SUMMARY

The impact of pursuing genealogy can affect various aspects of a person's life. The role within a family can often change, as one becomes the family historian. Family members will go to the expert on the family history and that can give the genealogist self-esteem and make them proud of their new role within the family. Prestige was expressed by my informants in association with this respected status in the family structure, as they often become the centre of attention at family reunions.

The self-identity of a genealogist can also change with their newfound knowledge. For many, questions about who they are and where they have come from are answered through their pursuit of genealogy, where they often gain a sense of belonging to society as a whole. The ordinary lives of their ancestors is what people find fascinating, it is these stories that bring history alive for them.

It can be said that taking up genealogy has an impact on how the person views the world around them and their place in that world. Through their commitment to learn about their ancestors, many people gain an appreciation and understanding for the struggles their ancestors had to endure, which in turn gives them an appreciation for their own lives, where their problems no longer seem as big as they once did. Some

genealogists gain a new perspective on life as they see themselves as a member of an extended family. Their self-identity can be reconstituted as they often gain a sense of belonging to not only a family but to society as a whole. Feelings of profoundness are shared as a genealogist's thoughts turn to her or his own existence as being a result of certain things happening in the past.

Genealogists also allude to experiencing a sense of connectedness to the land, to history, and to family. There is a new desire to travel to their ancestral homeland, history seems to be more relevant to them and they often feel closer to their family. Many genealogists simply enjoy the learning experience their research brings them and they welcome any opportunity to share that knowledge, especially with the next generation. Some genealogists also find pride in their heritage and some even take up traditional family or religious rituals.

The impact genealogy can have on a person's career is not generally a strong one. Most of the men interviewed started genealogy after they retired. However, through their desire to share the knowledge, three men have taken up work in the genealogical field. Although the percentage of women working as professional genealogists is lower than that of men, more women expressed the desire to work in the field but found that the lack of time and/or money prevented them from changing careers. However, unlike the men, some women indicated that genealogy had affected career and life choices.

Family life and other activities can also be affected by a person's interest in genealogy. Generally the impact is minimal as many genealogists assured me that they still continue to pursue other things in their life beside genealogy. Many genealogists say that they are independent from their spouse and each has their own interests, so for them

genealogy does not impact their relationship. For couples that share the interest, they feel that genealogy has been a benefit to their relationship, as they now have a common interest.

Often genealogy has brought the extended family closer as reunions are instigated and interest in the family history spreads to other relatives. Family members are generally supportive of the genealogist and are interested in the stories and artifacts, but they do not want to do any of the work. On occasion children will become interested in genealogy through a school project. Generally, genealogists feel that, as their children age they will become interested in their family history.

CHAPTER TEN**CONCLUSION**

The pursuit of popular genealogy in the Western world can become a serious leisure activity for many people, where they may experience a change in their self-identity and find new pride in their ethnic heritage. Some genealogists call their pursuit a “pox”; others say it is an “obsession” or even a “disease”. Dedicated genealogists often use expressions such as “caught the genealogy bug” or that they are “hooked” on genealogy. Many genealogists develop friendships through their participation and volunteerism at their local FHS. These sentiments and experiences speak to the notion of commitment in what is considered to be a leisure activity.

COMMITMENT in SERIOUS LEISURE

According to Buchanan and Shamir, commitment is considered to exist when a specific behaviour is done consistently and a sacrifice of other activities is made (Buchanan 1985:403; Shamir 1988:250). Shamir clarifies that consistent behaviour does not equate into commitment, but that it can certainly lead to it (1988:241). In relation to leisure activities, Shamir states that commitment may exist in these situations but there remains a freedom of behaviour and entrance (ibid:250-251). Stebbins refers to this form of commitment as value commitment instead of continuance commitment, which is applied to professionals (1992:52).

Shamir theorizes that an internal commitment to an activity can lead to external commitments. This phenomenon can be seen among the members of the AFHS. People tend to join FHSs for research support and guidance, as several of my informants had done. Many of these informants then became active volunteers for the society. Their

commitment to genealogy is strengthened because of the external commitments they have taken on.

The investment of “side bets”, such as time and money, are clear indications that a person is committed to an activity (Buchanan 1985:404, Shamir 1988:242). For genealogists, the time spent on their family history can vary, not only across individuals but also across time. Although genealogists will often take breaks from their research for various reasons, a committed genealogist will always go back to her or his work. Enthusiastic genealogists tend not to take breaks from their work. Several of my informants were even ashamed to admit to the amount of time they spend on their family history research. Several of them felt that genealogy was a part of every aspect of their life.

Money is a relative factor. Depending on one’s financial situation a \$100 may seem like a lot or a very little. For this reason I did not ask for an amount of money spent in a year on genealogy, rather I asked whether the informant felt that genealogy was an expensive endeavour. Generally, the genealogists whom I interviewed felt that the money they do invest in genealogy is well worth the expense. One informant felt that as one gets more involved with genealogy it gets more expensive, more documents need to be ordered and traveling to the “old country” becomes desirable and even necessary.

Stebbins, Shamir and Buchanan also posit that social connections or the development of friendships will cause one to be committed to the shared activity (Stebbins 1992:7; Shamir 1988: 243; Buchanan 1985:405). Genealogy can have a strong social aspect for an individual, as a necessary component of genealogy is communication.

Even if one does not belong to any FHS, s/he must still interact with family and staff members from libraries, archives, and churches for the required information.

As several informants indicated, genealogists love to talk about their research and share ideas with others. However, this conversation can bore people who are not interested in genealogy. FHSs offer a genealogist a place to interact with other genealogists, where they can share their stories and interests with others who are willing to listen. Beyond societies, there are seminars, courses, magazines, newsletters and online bulletin boards where genealogists can gain knowledge and share ideas and research with each other.

A characteristic often associated with genealogists is friendliness. My informants said that they are always willing to help people get started on their own genealogy or to offer advice. When a question is posed on the electronic bulletin board, Dis-Gen, the response by fellow genealogists is always abundant and quick. This attitude generally leads to genealogists making friends through their mutual interest in family history. The enthusiasm so many genealogists display is often contagious so that the friends of genealogists will start to work on their family history as well.

SELF-IDENTITY

Commitment to an activity can often lead to a change in the person's self-identity. Buchanan sees this change as the highest level of affective attachment to an activity, where the person feels in control of their participation as it fits with their own norms and values (1985:407). Many of my informants expressed that genealogy is a part of their lives; it is not something they simply pursue. The value placed on family often coincides

with one's interest in genealogy. Recording current family events become more important as many genealogists feel that future generations will want to know this information, just as they want to know the details of their ancestor's lives.

Shamir argues that internal commitment as a motivational state can lead to change in self-identity, but only if there are positive experiences and feelings associated with the activity (1988:244-245). Several genealogists told me that once they had found some information or were given a past family history, it got them "hooked" and they have not stopped since. One informant expressed that she "found it to be so fascinating, the idea that you could actually look up information on your ancestor", this fascination led to her commitment to genealogy. This passion felt by many genealogists is certainly expressed as a positive experience and it often changes their self-identity, where many informants shared feelings of confidence and pride in their role and accomplishments as the family historian.

Stebbins outlines nine durable benefits for serious leisure involving self-improvement and social growth that can cause a change in a person's self-identity (1992:7). The benefits of self-actualization and self-enrichment can be seen among genealogists. Several of my informants stated that learning the struggles of their ancestors gave them an appreciation for their lives as well as an understanding, compassion and acceptance of things done in the past by their ancestors. Some also found that personality traits discovered in their ancestors helped to not only explain their own personality traits, but it helped them to embrace those traits.

The benefits of self-expression and renewal of self are also found in people who pursue their genealogy. Lambert had an informant tell him that genealogy allowed her to

do her own work in her own way, as she was not given this freedom in her job (1996b:133). Feelings of accomplishment and enhancement of self-image are other benefits I saw in several of my informants. As Stebbins points out, genealogy is essentially an independent research project (1994:180), so when family histories are compiled and some even published, there is a strong sense of accomplishment, confidence and independence.

Another benefit of serious leisure activities is social interaction and belongingness. Many of the genealogists I interviewed belong to the AFHS and are strong supporters of the society, meaning that many of them volunteer and regularly attend the meetings of the society. Genealogists love to talk about their family history and to be able to express these thoughts and ideas can be important to them. The AFHS has a “brag” session during the meetings where people can come up before the group and share their recent accomplishments in genealogy.

Beyond belonging to a social group of people with the same interest, genealogy often gives people a profound sense of belonging to society as a whole. This is clearly expressed as informants relay their feelings of pride when they learn that their ancestors had played a small part in the building of their nation or society. Historical events have more meaning as people learn of the personal struggles their own ancestors faced during those times. A sense of connectedness to the larger society develops and genealogists seem to have the basic questions of the meaning of life addressed as they learn how their own family had contributed to the building of their society.

Another benefit Stebbins mentions is that lasting physical products of the activity is often produced. Several of my informants stated that they are doing the research into

their family history for posterity. Many leave family history books or lineage charts for the next generation.

The last benefit Stebbins lists is self-gratification (pure fun) and coincides with Shamir's thought that change to a person's self-identity only occurs if there are positive experiences and feelings associated with the activity. The most common satisfaction from pursuing genealogy mentioned by my informants was that the work was enjoyable, exciting and interesting, or simply put, fun. From finding a piece of information after a long search to meeting distant relatives, genealogists seem to genuinely enjoy this activity they pursue so whole-heartedly.

SERIOUS LEISURE

Stebbins has found certain qualities that distinguish serious leisure from casual leisure activities. One quality is the nine durable benefits listed above. Another quality is the need to persevere, to continue with the activity in the face of adversity (1992:6). A common sentiment among my informants is that a genealogist must persevere through the "down times" when research does not turn up any information. Genealogists tend to find it a challenge they want to tackle when the information is not easily discovered. Many told me that the harder it is to find a piece of information, the greater the satisfaction when it is eventually found.

The next quality of serious leisure is the development of employment or volunteer interests in their leisure activity (ibid). More than half of my informants either volunteer for the AFHS (32%), want to be a professional genealogist (12%) or have become one (15%).

A fourth quality is tied to the second, where a career in the activity is pursued, knowledge and experience in the field also develops (ibid). Buchanan also states that the development of "side bets", such as skills and knowledge, will raise the level of commitment a person has to their chosen activity (1985:404). In this situation an investment of learning will cause a person to feel that they must utilize their newly acquired skills.

In the world of genealogy there is now a standard for evidence, which is very strict in terms of what is considered legitimate information. Standards are also set for citing references, which are considered to be top priority among enthusiastic genealogists today. Committed amateur genealogists, not just professionals, use these standards. Stebbins clarifies that knowledge and experience develops more among professionals. However, in the case of genealogy, these skills may grow equally in an amateur as a professional genealogist. The exchange of information is the corner stone to genealogy. A genealogist will learn a lot from others when they volunteer or simply attend meetings at their local FHS.

Another quality of serious leisure activities is the tendency for subcultures to develop for the activity, where others doing the same thing will form a group (Stebbins 1992:7). This quality is evident in the world of genealogy. There are countless societies around the world, specializing in areas, religious groups and descendents of a person or those who were part of a historical event. A genealogist can also be part of a group on the internet through electronic bulletin boards and mailing lists where people can exchange information and queries.

The last quality Stebbins mentions relates to the five preceding ones, in that “participants in serious leisure tend to *identify* strongly with their chosen pursuits” (ibid). Many of my informants expressed that genealogy affects all aspects of their lives. The opposite was also stated, where all aspects of their lives seem to relate back to genealogy in some manner. Even the neophyte genealogists I interviewed expressed how the qualities needed for genealogy are a part of who they are and that all other interests in their lives seem to relate back to those central qualities.

Stebbins proposes that there are three forms of serious leisure: amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers (ibid:8). Given the characteristics for each form, genealogy fits in between amateurs and hobbyists.

Genealogists are amateurs in the sense that they are “devotees who love a particular activity” (ibid:10). Genealogy also fulfils the nine durable benefits found by amateurs in their pursuits, as mentioned above. However, Stebbins’ macro-sociological definition of amateurs compares them to their professional counterparts as well as the public to whom they relate to or perform for (ibid). This PAP system does not seem to apply to genealogy as there are not very many professionals in the field and so the average genealogist does not compare their work, experience or knowledge level to that of a professional. The public do not have a strong presence in genealogy either. Most genealogies stay within the family, only a few family history books make it into bookstores.

Stebbins’ micro-sociological definition of an amateur does seem to be more applicable to the genealogical experience. This definition states “amateurs hold certain attitudes that differentiate them from both professionals and their publics” (ibid). An

amateur genealogist works on her or his own family and has personal reasons for pursuing such endeavours. A professional genealogist generally does research for paying clients, it is not always their own family they are researching and their reason for doing so is economic, not personal. However, men tend to become professional genealogists so that they may promote the field of genealogy and share their knowledge with those who are interested, where women have more of an economic reason to become professional genealogists.

Stebbins' definition of a hobby as "a specialized pursuit beyond one's occupation, a pursuit that one finds particularly interesting and enjoyable because of its durable benefits" (ibid) can be easily applied to genealogy. Although Stebbins says that a hobbyist is serious and committed to his or her pursuits, he feels that there is no sense of social necessity or personal obligation to engage in the activity (ibid). It is here that genealogy does not fit Stebbins' definition of a hobby. Genealogists often have a strong sense of social necessity, as many believe that they are preserving personal accounts of history for not only their own family but for society as a whole. Genealogists also have a sense of personal obligation to record the information if not for their own gratification than certainly for future generations of their family. This obligation can even become a family obligation, where the family wants to know this information as well.

Stebbins hobbyist – public (HP) system states that a hobbyist can have a commercial public to which they sell their products, such as wooden toys for example. It also applies to businesses that sell goods to the hobbyist for their activity (ibid:11). This HP system seems to apply to genealogy in that there is a large and growing commercial market that caters to the material goods genealogists need to conduct their research and

compile their family histories. The countless web sites dedicated to supplying information to genealogists tend to charge for access to their records. More and more people are becoming professional genealogists, as people want to hire someone to complete and/or assemble their family history. Desktop publishing and genealogical programs are sold to assist the amateur genealogist to produce their own family history book. Companies now sell archival quality storage supplies to genealogists so that they can safely store and document their family memorabilia and photos.

GENEALOGY: MORE THAN A HOBBY

According to Stebbins there are five different types of hobbyists: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants, players and liberal artists (ibid:11-13). Stebbins categorizes non-professional genealogists as liberal arts hobbyists (2001:123).

Liberal Art Hobbyists

Genealogy does seem to fit quite nicely in this liberal art category. However, it is not a perfect fit. This category of hobbyists actively seeks out knowledge for its own sake, striving to acquire a broad base of knowledge so that they may fully understand the topic of interest. Although liberal art hobbyists do use their knowledge as they share what they know with others, Stebbins feels that practical application for this knowledge is secondary (1994:175).

Many genealogists do strive to learn the social and economic history of the time and place as it relates to their ancestors' lives. Some of my informants feel that a family history is not complete unless the social and historical context is explained, as it answers many questions about why ancestors made the choices they did. Although most

genealogists gather knowledge about their own family history for the simple enjoyment of the research, many people will then compile the information into a book of some sort so that future generations of their family can also enjoy their efforts. This is how they share their knowledge with others.

Practical application of genealogical information does exist as current genealogies are being used to fill in gaps in the national historical records. The personal stories of those who lived through the events explain the social facts on a detailed and individual level that seems to bring more meaning to the events for the people of today. Some people also use their genealogical information for medical purposes as they search for family medical history to explain a current medical problem with a relative or themselves. Others use genealogy to establish their right to citizenship in a country they want to live or work in. For example, a Canadian can obtain British citizenship by showing that their grandparent was English.

Liberal arts hobbyists acquire their knowledge in an active manner rather than in a passive one, they do not simply sit back and wait for the information to come to them (ibid:176). Genealogy definitely requires active learning, as the information they seek is often found in obscure places, such as church basements and with distant relatives in other countries.

According to Stebbins, liberal arts hobbyists say that they are attracted to these interests because it develops their personalities, intellectual capacities and understanding of life (ibid). As mentioned above, genealogy can change a person's self-identity, they acquire a great deal of general historical information and many genealogists develop a meaning to their life and a sense of belonging to their family and society as a whole.

Stebbins has noted that genealogy provides people with a great sense of self-worth as they find their place in history and the family. They are then able to reflect on their present and even future lives (2001:123). A liberal arts hobby is usually a life long pursuit of self-guided learning, mainly through reading (Stebbins 1994:176).

Genealogy can definitely be a never-ending endeavour, as many genealogists believe that once a person starts s/he will never be able to stop. As well, most learning in genealogy is self-taught. Although there are courses and seminars offered, the majority of the genealogists I interviewed said that the best form of learning was by just doing the task. As most of genealogical record is in written form and the knowledge of the social and historical context is found in books, reading is a requirement in genealogy.

Stebbins argues that although liberal arts hobbies are done for personal growth and satisfaction, there is a need to externalise it in some way. This helps the hobbyist to maintain what they already know, and by sharing with others, they may learn even more. This externalisation is usually done by talking to others through informal conversations (ibid:178). However, Stebbins believes that liberal art hobbyists do not typically have a social world of their own. The means of acquiring knowledge are individualistic, and as such these hobbyists tend to be reclusive. He feels that these hobbyists only enter the social world to advance their interests, by taking non-credit courses on their topic (ibid:180).

This is where genealogy differs from Stebbins' definition of a liberal arts hobby and Buchanan's notion that leisure social worlds lack a clear geographic location (1985:410). The world of genealogy does have a very large and strong social world. There are countless FHSs where people meet to share ideas and solutions to problems.

The endless sites on the internet also provide support and knowledge for people who are interested. There are many publications from these societies and websites, all offering a means of communication with fellow genealogists. Although genealogy is an individual pursuit, it does require the assistance of others to find the information. More than just going to these societies for the information they need, many genealogists are dedicated to continual participation within their local society. They enjoy the social aspects, beyond the exchange of knowledge.

Other Hobbyists

Stebbins' category of collector can also be applied to genealogy, as a genealogist collects information on their family's history. A collector hobbyist must develop a technical knowledge of the circumstances in which the item is acquired, as well as developing a sophisticated appreciation of these items. With this comes a broad understanding of the item's historical and contemporary production and use (1992:11).

Genealogists must learn the technical knowledge of using archives and other resources to do the research. They also develop a sophisticated appreciation for the information as an experienced genealogist will be more successful in determining if information is valid or not. The inspiration for collecting is generally not financial, but rather there are personal and social reasons that inspire the hobbyist to collect the item. For the most part the reason for collecting family history information is personal instead of financial.

The category of activity participant hobbyist involves physical movement but folk artists also fall under this category. Folk artists have little or no interchange with professionals or amateurs so are not part of Stebbins' amateur category (ibid:13). This

category applies to genealogy in the sense that non-professional genealogists have little interaction with the professional genealogists. Hobbyist folk artists lie outside the PAP system. The majority of amateur genealogists do the work for personal enjoyment, are self-taught and generally have no need to come into contact with a professional.

Genealogy can also be applied to the category of player hobbyist, those who compete in sports (ibid). Genealogists can become competitive as they compare lineages with each other, determining who can go back through the generations further and who has more famous ancestors in their family. As mentioned above the AFHS provides a forum where genealogists can “brag” about their accomplishments in their family history endeavours.

Tensions

Stebbins also mentions that tensions may surface as a hobbyist spends increasing amounts of time engaged in her or his activity (ibid:14); and this can be felt among the family members of genealogists. Generally, relatives are supportive of the genealogist's interest in their family history. Although most relatives would never actually do any of the research, many do show an interest in the information acquired. As genealogists tend to be people who are in the later stages of life, most of their children are adults and have started a life for themselves, so they are not affected by the daily dedication a person can have towards their genealogical work. The spouses I spoke to are generally supportive of their partner's interest in genealogy. Some welcome the independent interests each other has in their lives as they are able to be supportive of the other's interests. Other couples share the interest in family history, enjoying the time they spend together.

Those genealogists with children still living at home must find a balance between running a household and their interest in genealogy. Tensions may arise as travel plans tend to be geared towards family and genealogical interests. Often when large projects are taken on, such as writing a family history book, the family often gets dinner late and not a lot of attention is given to the children. As these projects are usually for limited times, the children seem to respect their parent's interest and adjust their lives accordingly. One nice aspect with genealogy is that the majority of the work is done from home so at least the parent is still around to care for the children.

A PROFILE OF GENEALOGISTS

There has only been a handful of studies similar to this thesis, that of researching the people who pursue genealogy. Ronald Lambert's study of the OGS (1995a:75) and Cardell Jacobson's study of the WSGS (Jacobson et al. 1989:196), along with my own survey of the AFHS, all show that women outnumber men in these genealogical societies. However, the Sinko and Peters survey conducted at the Newberry Library (1983:102), and my own Calgary mail-out survey show that men are just as interested in genealogy as women. These studies seem to indicate that male genealogists tend to be more independent in their interest and do not join their local FHS, as women appear to do.

As Jacobson points out, the popular notion that the typical genealogist is elderly is correct (Jacobson et al. 1989:203). The mail-out survey conducted for my thesis had a high percentage of responses (39.2%) from people over the age of 50 and the mean average age the informants interviewed for my research was 60. Both Lambert and Jacobson found similar results. This is not to say that only the elderly practice

genealogy, however, in general terms genealogy does seem to attract more people who are advanced in years from those who are still relatively young in age.

The statistics gathered by Lambert, Jacobson and myself on the employment status of genealogists vary. My study found that many genealogists work full time, others are only semi-retired as they still pursue part-time employment or have extensive volunteer obligations. The statistics for genealogists who are retired are just as varied as well as for those who consider themselves to be homemakers. It is clear from the wide range of statistics that no definitive assumption can be made that genealogy is for the retired or for those who spend their days at home.

One common assumption supported by all the studies is that genealogists tend to have post-secondary schooling. The majority of genealogists in all three studies had some post-secondary education. This makes sense, as the bulk of genealogical work is research, so a person pursuing this endeavour must be comfortable conducting library and archival research. They must also have some organizational skills, as the paper work that is generated through the search for one's family history must be sorted out.

Where my study differs from both Lambert's and Jacobson's is in the mobility of those who pursue genealogy. Both the Ontario and Wisconsin studies determined that people who had not only lived in one community all their lives, but who lived in the same community as their ancestors had lived, tended to pursue genealogy more (Lambert 1996b:131; Jacobson 1986:353). Jacobson refers to these people as *stayers*. He argued that genealogists are less mobile and are more rural in their living arrangements. Lambert also found similar results among his OGS sample, stating that his sample had "substantial residential stability" (1996b:131).

Calgary is a young and multi-cultural city and so is mainly composed of people who have moved there. As such only two of my informants were actually born and never moved from Calgary. The rest of them had not only moved to Calgary but had moved several times in their lives from different cities, provinces and even countries.

My research has revealed that genealogy is not only for *stayers*, but *movers* too are interested in their family history, wherever they may be. It may mean that Calgary genealogists have to travel more to acquire the answers they need, but with the surge of genealogical information on the internet, where a person lives seems irrelevant in this age of globalization.

It is interesting to note how difficult it was to locate people who have no interest in family history. Although Calgary is a young, independent and contemporary city, populated by people who generally have no ancestral ties to the land, there is still a strong interest in genealogy, as my survey showed that 30 percent of Calgarians consider themselves to be genealogists. The AFHS is a large society, which has a strong membership in terms of volunteers and attendance to the monthly meetings and their annual seminars. Apart from the AFHS, the many libraries and archives within the city are kept busy with continual patrons and inquires relating to genealogy.

INSPIRATION

Although it was initially difficult for most of my informants to tell me why they started genealogy, they all could come up with some clear reasons for their pursuit of family history. The most common inspiration mentioned was general curiosity or interest in one's family history specifically and history in general. As well, the actual research

and detective work involved in finding family information attracts many to the pursuit of genealogy.

Family can be a strong trigger to work on one's genealogy, as grandchildren, children and even parents ask for information on their family history and they approach the relative who may have the answers or the resources to find out. Existing family histories often encourage people to work on their particular family as well. The family stories told and even those kept secret, pique a person's curiosity and they want to learn more. Wanting to put names to the faces in old family photos or a journey to one's ancestral homeland often spark an interest in learning about their family history. Having all the family memorabilia often causes people to feel obligated to do something with all the material and hence they start working on their genealogy.

Mortality is a common reason to begin genealogy. The death of a close relative can often cause people to want to preserve the memories of the deceased and it makes them aware of a perceived importance to record family and personal information from relatives before they die. One's own impending death is also a reason to pursue genealogy, as they want to record what they know of the family. Medical reasons may cause a person to research their family history, to find common causes of death and illness and to be able to pass that information on to the next generation.

DEDICATION

There are varying degrees of dedication a person can have towards genealogy depending on their level of experience. Neophyte genealogists generally have a lesser sense of dedication than more experienced genealogists. Genealogy often starts as a

“hobby” but tends to grow into a “passion” or even a “disease”. Professional genealogists often refer to their dedication to genealogy as an “obsession”.

Novice genealogists generally feel that their dedication will change over time. Some feel that as they “get into it more” their dedication will increase; others feel that as the work decreases so too will their dedication. As a person becomes more experienced in genealogy they tend to believe that their dedication to this pursuit does not change with the amount of time spent on it or the amount of information gathered.

Family photos and artifacts help people to visualize their ancestors beyond their vital statistics and life stories. Most genealogists enjoy the family memorabilia they have been able to collect, preserve and display. This careful preservation of these artifacts speaks to the dedication genealogists have to their pursuit of family history.

LIFE IMPACT

The potential impact genealogy has on a person can affect all aspects of their life. The struggles ancestors had to endure are appreciated and understood by genealogists and this in turn often gives them an appreciation for their own lives. A new perspective on life can develop as a genealogist learns about the various lives that led to her or his own existence. These profound thoughts often relate not only to a new connectedness to their extended family, but many genealogists also experience a newfound pride in their heritage, often taking up traditional family or religious rituals. As well, a sense of connection to their ancestral homeland and to society in general can develop.

Although genealogy does not generally have a great impact on a person’s career, as so many take up this endeavour later in life, it can affect choices people make in their

existing careers. Family tends to become more important and people learn what truly interests them or what they are good at. Learning that they enjoy history related topics or spending time with people can often affect their career choices.

Generally, genealogy has only some impact on a person's daily life. Genealogists will do other things in their lives beside genealogy. Time is made for family and other activities, but when there is a large project at hand genealogy can take up all their time. Gradually travel plans are geared towards genealogical pursuits, where a journey to see the ancestral homeland or relatives takes priority over a sunny beach holiday. The immediate family of a genealogist is generally supportive of their work and they often take an interest in the stories and artifacts collected by the family historian. A school project can trigger an interest in family history with the younger generation and, as the majority of genealogists hope, with age children may take up the pursuit of genealogy.

GENEALOGY IN POST-MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY

As defined by one of the key theorists of post-modernism, the distinctive temper of the post-modern age of North America and Western Europe is defined by the twin themes of individualism and heterogeneity, where there is an emphasis on developing one's personal identity and cherishing a variety of historical antecedents, as opposed to the classic 'modern' emphasis upon blending into the melting pot (Harvey 1990:5, 9). It is obvious that the pursuit of genealogy fits into this focus on individualism and unique heritage particularly well, and this helps us to understand the burgeoning of popular genealogy in late Twentieth-century and turn-of-the-millennium society.

Many genealogists express a sense of individualism and uniqueness because they share their particular history with only their immediate family, as it is based on the history of their ancestors. Certain events had to occur, and particular people had to meet in order for the genealogist to even exist. This notion of existence creates a unique sense of the self, as no one else (except their siblings) shares that particular history.

As genealogists often experience a change in their self-identity, they also develop a new role within their family, that of *family historian*. Many genealogists express feelings of pride and accomplishment, as they become the family's authority on their family history. Beyond knowing about their ancestors, genealogists can also take on the role of *kin-keeper*, where they record current information on living relatives.

This role can be compared to the function of specialist genealogist in kin-based societies. The *kin-keeper* not only records events and dates for their family but many also share that information with relatives in an effort to sustain the kin network. However, in the Western world the kin network is not as functionally essential to social organization as it is in kin-based societies (notwithstanding various studies by family sociologists like Bott and Banton who have shown that small kin coalitions and kin networks have certain functions in industrial and urban societies). Although the practical functions of kinship groups have waned in civic-based societies, people still value their family and traditions. "The revival of interest in basic institutions (such as the family and community), and the search for historical roots are all signs of a search for more secure moorings and longer-lasting values in a shifting world" (ibid:292).

This emphasis on the difference in history and individualism has sparked the growth of a 'heritage industry' in the Western world that attempts "to create a shallow

screen that intervenes between our present lives and our history” (Hewison in Harvey 1990:62). Robert Hewison explains that:

The impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. Without knowing where we have been it is difficult to know where we are going. The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity, objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols. Continuity between past and present creates a sense of sequence out of aleatory chaos and, since change is inevitable, a stable system of ordered meaning enables us to cope with both innovation and decay. The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis, it is a social emollient and reinforces national identity when confidence is weakened or threatened (ibid:86).

The genealogists interviewed for this thesis have expressed similar notions, namely, in order to know yourself you must first know where you came from and how it is that you are here today. Family artifacts offer people a connection to their unique history. Eugene Rochberg-Halton conducted a study in North Chicago in 1977 and found that people did not value the material ‘trophy’ which displayed a person’s socio-economic position in society, but rather they valued those “artifacts that embodied ‘ties to loved ones and kin, valued experiences and activities, and memories of significant life events and people’” (Rochberg-Halton in Harvey 1990:292).

Family artifacts and stories contribute to a person’s self-identity “that lies outside the sensory overloading of consumerist culture and fashion. The home becomes a private museum to guard against the ravages of time-space compression.” (Harvey 1990:292). Time-space compression in post-modernism is the common experience of people as the pace of life speeds up and the world seems to shrink through global trade, images on television and the greater ease of global travel (ibid:285-295). The importance and value

placed on ancestors and their artifacts offer genealogists a base from which they can create their identity in the contemporary consumerism of the Western world.

SUMMARY

In the post-modern era of the Western world there is an emphasis on individualism, personal identity and unique history, and the pursuit of genealogy fits with these notions. There is often a profound change in one's self-identity as a person gains a sense of social belonging and finds meaning to her or his life as s/he is now seen as a unique link in a chain of people and events.

Many genealogists express that there is a natural human desire to know where we came from, and they say that they find these answers through the study of their family history. Many claim that this information is necessary to truly know oneself. Beyond simply enjoying the work involved in digging up one's roots, the importance of family and history is appreciated through genealogy, where there is often a revival of ethnic and family traditions and religion. Not only is the meaning of life answered for many genealogists, but the meaning and acceptance of death is also gained through this pursuit.

There is a general sense of fun in genealogy, a high investment of time and money and friendships develop along with specialized skills and knowledge. As family historian, a genealogist finds a special role within the family, where they are not only the authority on the family history, but are often the *kin-keeper* for current relatives. Although, kin networks are not essential to the civic-based societies, they do offer people a secure base from which they can deal with their ever-changing world.

Genealogy is a committed serious leisure but according to Robert Stebbins' definition of both an amateur and a hobbyist, genealogy seems to be somewhere in between the two. There is no comparison to professional genealogists for the amateur and yet there is a strong sense of social and personal obligation to their pursuit of genealogy, making it more than just a hobby.

Some of the assumptions about who does genealogy are supported and others are not. Both men and women equally pursue genealogy, yet women tend to join FHSs more. The assumption that genealogy is for the elderly is supported in general terms, however, many young people also actively research their family history. The notion that retired people tend to be genealogists is not supported by the studies, as each study has different statistics for genealogists who work full time, those who are homemakers and those who are retired or semi-retired.

The studies do support the idea that genealogy is done by people with post-secondary schooling, as this pursuit requires a comfort level in conducting library research and sorting through paperwork. As my study has shown, people who do not have life long ties to their community or the land they live on are interested in genealogy. The personal computer and the internet has allowed people from around the world to search out their family history, whether they live on their ancestral homeland or not.

The more experience a person gains in genealogy the more dedicated they tend to be towards it, where it encompasses all aspects of life, from family to career and even travel plans. Genealogists generally hope that their passion for family history is passed on to the next generation, so that their children will learn the value and importance of family, tradition and history.

GLOSSARY

- Active Genealogist:** One who is collecting new family history information on a regular basis, reading material from genealogy societies and recording their discoveries in some manner. This labour may not be continuous, there will be times that the work is not advanced, but generally, the investigation is progressed.
- Amateur:** A devotee who loves a particular activity. Amateurs are considered to be members of a professional-amateur-public system of relations and relationships. Amateurs hold certain attitudes that differentiate them from both professionals and their publics (Stebbins 1992:10).
- Civic Polity:** Also referred to as a civil society. In reference to the anthropology of kinship and marriage, a society of "citizens" in which common, centralized institutions of governance exist and in which a citizen's relationship to others is regulated by civil law (Hatt 1997:27).
- Commitment:** The pledging or binding of an individual to behavioural acts that result in some degree of affective attachment to the behaviour or to the role associated with the behaviour and which produce side bets as a result of that behaviour. "Side bets" are the other interests and consequences involved in the continuation of a specific behaviour; which can include the investment of time and money in the behaviour or the development of friends through the mutual interest in an activity. The social-role component of side bets can also cause a person's self-identity to change (Buchanan 1985:402).
- Genealogist:** One who investigates and records the descent of ancestors as well as family histories of their own lineage or someone else's.
- Genealogy:** The descent of ancestors and record of family history; also the study of ancestors and family history.
- Hobby:** Is a specialized pursuit beyond one's occupation, a pursuit that one finds particularly interesting and enjoyable because of its durable benefits (Stebbins 1992:10).
- Kin-keeper:** A person who tracks living relatives in terms of vital statistics and other important family events (Lambert 1996a:13) in an effort to sustain kin networks. This role is usually found in complex societies and is often socially constructed as the job of women (Hatt 1997:103).

Kinship Polity: A form of political or governmental system based substantially on, or embedded in, a system of kinship relations. When used in contrast to "civic polity", a Great Divide opposition which divides political systems into two broad contrastive categories (Hatt 1997:101).

Popular Genealogy: Refers to the tracing of unknown or forgotten ancestors and kin by research in family or public records. Popular genealogy is characteristic of complex and large-scale societies in which kinship plays a relatively minor role in defining a person's personal status and legal obligations. People of the Western world may, as a matter of personal interest, embark on such genealogical research as part of a quest for personal identity or 'roots', and many commercial enterprises have been established to cater to this interest and to facilitate genealogical searches and transport to 'old countries' (Hatt 1997:142).

Professional Genealogist: One who sells their research services for the pursuit of a client's family ancestry and history.

Serious Leisure: The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge. Serious leisure is different from activities done in a casual manner, as the term *serious* implies the activity is more purposeful and directed (Stebbins 1992:3).

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APPENDIX A**CONSENT FORMS****INITIAL CONSENT FORM**

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this study is to understand how and why genealogy is pursued in the Western world, as well as the effects it has on the person's life. You have been chosen for your interest in and pursuit of genealogy. You have been approached either through membership to a family history society, enrolment in a genealogy course and through word of mouth.

You will be interviewed and audio taped (if willing) for a period of roughly one hour, preferably at the subject's home. If you allow the interview to be taped, you have the option to turn the tape off at any time during the interview. If you also permit, photos will be taken of your collection of family history memorabilia. Participation is purely a voluntary decision, and you have the option to stop the interview at any time, or choose not to answer specific questions. You may also, at a future date, withdraw your information from the study.

You may choose to have your name used or not in the research. If anonymity is chosen then the information collected about you will never have your identity associated with it. Only Adrienne Horne will have access to the raw data. The interview tapes and the data collected will be stored at the University of Calgary and will be confidentially shredded two years after the project is completed. No one else will have access to this information.

Adrienne Horne will provide you with a summary of the findings if you so wish. This summary will be mailed to you.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Adrienne Horne at (403) 730-4863 or Dr. D. G. Hatt at (403) 220-6518

If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Research Services Office at (403) 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.

Do you wish to remain anonymous? ☐ Yes, ☐ No.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

CLOSING CONSENT FORM

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you are satisfied with the information gathered by the researcher and are willing to have the data (or only parts of it) used in the study, please sign this form indicating that the researcher may use this information in their study.

Participation is purely a voluntary decision. In view of the information gathered you have the choice to remain anonymous or not. You may also withdraw your information from the study at a later date or change your mind about anonymity.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information at any time after the interview. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Adrienne Horne at (403) 730-4863 or Dr. D. G. Hatt at (403) 220-6518

If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Research Services Office at (403) 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.

Do you wish to remain anonymous? ☐ Yes, ☐ No.

May all information be used or are there sections which should be omitted? ☐ Yes, all information may be used, or ☐ No, omit the following information. (Please specify below)

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GENEALOGISTS

Life Chart

1. Chart the informant's life history; recording places of residence from birth to present, education, career, marriage, children, and other major life events.
- 1a. How important was family when you were growing up?
2. Are there other leisure activities you engage in?

Accounts

3. At what point on the chart did you begin to do genealogy?
4. Was there something that caused you to begin the work: a life experience, a person, or books?
5. Who's family do you research?
- 6a. Are you responsible for knowing the family's birthdays and anniversaries? Do family members ask you "*when is so-and-so's birthday*"?
- 6b. If this is your role, do you think it influenced your interest in genealogy?

How is the Work Done?

7. Did you take any courses, read any books or go to any seminars to learn how to do the research? Or was it self - taught?
8. Do you use a computer to keep track of the family trees and other information or do you use paper charts?
9. Do you use the internet for genealogy? If so, what do you use it for?
10. Do you use FHS, the LDS or other archives in your research? If so, how useful are they to you?

Level of Dedication

11. How many hours a week do you think you spend on genealogy?
12. Is the work constant, or are there breaks in it? Times when no work is done?
13. Is travel determined by your interest in or knowledge of your family history?
14. Does this research have a noticeable financial commitment?
15. What sort of artifacts (things) have you collected relating to your family?
16. Do you belong to any type of genealogy group or FHS? Which ones?
17. Do you attend meetings, seminars or fairs on genealogy?
18. Are any of your friends genealogists? Where they first friends or genealogists?
19. What term would you use to describe your level of dedication to the work?
Examples (if needed): hobby, work, endeavour, obsession, pox, job.
20. Plot their dedication on a scale (1 to 10): my opinion and their own.
• 1 is no interest • 5 is a regular hobby • 10 is a fanatic
21. Does the level of dedication change across time? If so, what causes the change?

Impact on Life

22. Has this research into your family's history impacted your view of life or your place in it? If so, how?
23. Did it impact or influence your career? (Depending on when in their life they began the research).
24. How has this work affected your family life and other leisure activities?
25. How does your family feel about your work?
26. How does the work make you feel?
27. Do you have any goals set for your genealogy work?
28. Record any genealogical stories the informant shared during the interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

1. How long has your family member done genealogy?
2. Have you ever had any interest in the work?
3. Would you ever do genealogy yourself? Why?
4. Have you changed your opinion about genealogy through your life?
Has there been life changes which caused this change?
5. How do you feel about the genealogy done by your family member?
Do you get anything out of it?
6. How much does the genealogy effect daily family life? ie: family trips, lack of dinner, etc.
7. Have you ever helped in the research/investigation of genealogy?
If yes, how much have you helped? Has it lead to any personal interest in genealogy?
8. What do you like most and least of your family member doing genealogy?
9. Has the work had any impact on your life?
10. Have you seen any impact on your family member doing genealogy?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL GENEALOGISTS

1. When, why and how did you become a professional genealogist?
2. Is it full time work? How does it pay? What do you charge?
3. Do you operate the business out of your home? Do you advertise?
4. Who do you cater to: groups, regions, or anything?
5. What services do your clients request?
6. Have you taken or given any genealogical courses?
7. What computer program(s) do you use?
8. What services do you use to do the research?
9. What term would you use to describe the dedication of genealogists?
10. Do you still work on your own genealogy?

APPENDIX C**MAIL-OUT SURVEY****COVER LETTERS FOR THE MAIL-OUT SURVEY**

Dear Recipient,

The following is a short questionnaire for a graduate research project from the University of Calgary. This project is looking at what motivates people to study their family history. Through this survey I hope to determine the popularity of this activity and who does it, as well as how people go about researching ancestors. I am also interested in the opinions of those who do not study their family history.

The Master of Arts thesis, which will be written based on the data collected, is a public document and maybe viewed by the general public through the Anthropology Department at the University of Calgary. Several articles will also be published in various academic and Family History Society journals.

If you have any concerns about this survey, please see attached letter from my supervisor, Dr. D. G. Hatt or contact him at (403) 220-6518. You may also contact myself, Adrienne Horne, at (403) 268-4235.

If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Research Services Office at (403) 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.

Thank you for your time and participation

Sincerely,

Adrienne Horne
Graduate Student
University of Calgary
(403) 268-4235
abhorne@attglobal.net

UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

2500 UNIVERSITY DRIVE NW · CALGARY, ALBERTA · T2N 1N4 · PHONE: 403-220-6515 · FAX: 403-284-5467

September 23, 2001

Dear Recipient,

Ms Adrienne Horne is a graduate student at the University of Calgary enrolled in an postgraduate Master of Arts program in the Department of Anthropology. She is currently doing research for her MA thesis on the subject of popular genealogy.

As you may know, genealogy is an important topic in anthropology. Genealogy provides one of the principal ways in which social and legal rights are reckoned and established in most traditional societies in the world. However in our own society, genealogy has over the centuries become less and less important as other means (public registries of births and deaths, state registration of land ownership, etc.) of establishing who we are and how we are related to one another have taken over most of the jobs which genealogy used to do.

Yet despite this gradual decline, genealogy has made a come-back in the last decade or so. Millions of people in North America and Europe have taken up researching their "family tree" as a hobby, partly made possible by genealogical research software programs and the internet. The ease of travel back to places where one's family originated has also been an important spur to this renaissance in genealogy.

Ms Horne's research is one of the first research projects in anthropology which attempts to understand this renaissance in genealogy in our time. In order to accomplish her project, she needs your help in filling out and returning the enclosed questionnaire. Even if you have *no* interest in genealogy, she needs to hear from you, since one of the things she is trying to establish is the rate of interest in "family tree" research in Calgary. Ms Horne's research project has been vetted and approved by a committee of professors at the University of Calgary, and you have my personal assurance that this is a bona fide research project. If you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact me at my office (220-6518) or by email (dhatt@ucalgary.ca) or at the fax number given above.

Yours truly,

Dr Doyle Hatt
Associate Professor of Anthropology

MAIL-OUT SURVEY

Please have an adult fill this out or if there is someone in your house who does genealogy please have them fill it out. Feel free to use the back of the sheet for any extra comments. Use the self addressed stamped envelope to return the questionnaire. Thank you for your time.

Circle or fill in the appropriate answer

Postal Code: _____

Age range: 18 - 30 30 - 50 50 or over

Gender: male female

Household structure: Single income Double income Rent Own

How many dependents are in the house?: _____

Occupation: Professional Self-employed Salary employed Student Retired

1. Do you, or have you ever, researched your family tree and/or history? **YES** **NO**

If you answered **YES**

2a. How long have you been doing this (or were you doing this)? _____

2b. On average, how many hours a week do (or did) you work on it? _____

If you answered **NO**

3a. Do you have any interest in your family history? **YES** **NO**

3b. If you answered **YES**

Why do you not research your family history?

 No time Do not know what to do Other _____

4. If you were to begin researching your family tree, where would you look for information on *how* to do it? _____

5. Regardless of your level of interest in genealogy, would you be willing to talk about this subject some more? If so, please include your printed name and phone number.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FROM THE MAIL-OUT SURVEY

Respondent has done genealogical research

1. What is your ethnic heritage?
2. Where were you born?
3. What got you interested in your family history?
4. Is there a goal for the work you do? Ie: book, charts, etc
5. How do you organize the data: on paper or computer?
If computer: What program do you use and do you like it?
6. What resources do you use to do the research?
7. Do you belong to any Family History Societies? Which ones?

Respondent has an interest in their family history

1. What is your ethnic heritage?
2. Where were you born?
3. Why do you have an interest in your family history?
4. Do you think there would be a great time and/or financial commitment in researching your family history?
 - a. Would you do the research if you had the time and/or money?
5. What do you think is involved in doing the research? What type of work is required?
6. If you *don't know what to do*, have you ever considered reading "how to" books or going to a course or seminar? Or is the interest just not strong enough to bother?

APPENDIX D QUESTIONS FOR LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES**City Archives, Public Library, U of C Library, Glenbow Library & Archives**

1. On average, how many requests do you get for genealogy information in a month?
2. Is there a special section for genealogy interests?
 - If so: a. How large is the section in comparison to the rest of the library/archives?
 - b. What areas are covered: geographical or ethnic?
 - c. Are there also general historical books in this section?
3. Generally, who are asking about genealogy: in terms of gender, ethnicity and age?
4. Are there any special services offered to help with genealogical research: courses or talks?
5. Do you have volunteers who help people with their genealogy?
6. Do you do research for a written request? If so: Do you charge anything?

Alberta Family Histories Society

1. How many people use the library on average in a month?
2. Do non-members use the library? How many in a month, on average?
3. Are they coming into the library or are they writing requests?
4. How many volunteer in the library in a month?
5. What do you charge to look up information for someone?
6. What areas does the library cover: geographical or ethnic?

LDS Family History Centre

1. How many people use the centre on average in a month?
2. How many order information from Salt Lake City in a month?
3. Do you get written requests to look up information?
 - If so: Do you do it and what do you charge for the service?
4. How many volunteer in the centre in a month?