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Volunteer Tourism

An Exploration of the Perceptions and Experiences of Volunteer Tourists and the Role of Authenticity in Those Experiences

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Volunteer Tourism: An Exploration of the Perceptions and Experiences of

Volunteer Tourists and the Role of Authenticity in Those Experiences

by K.A. Carter

This dissertation explores the volunteer tourism phenomenon and the role of authenticity in

volunteer tourists' experiences. Although previous research has explored volunteer tourism,

this study examines the phenomenon using in-depth interviews of volunteer tourists who have

done different types of volunteer tourism trips. This study investigates the types of

opportunities in which these volunteer tourists have participated, why they have participated

in volunteer tourism, and what they have gained from their volunteer tourism experiences.

The study's results illustrate numerous opportunities to travel almost anywhere in the world,

including developed countries, and that teaching and construction were common volunteer

activities. A typical volunteer tourism trip for these participants lasted two weeks with the

volunteering portion lasting a month or less, and all participants took part in touring the local

area in some way. The study explores the motives of these volunteer tourists and found that

most participants went on their trip to have a new experience of a different part of the world

or to help others. Previous researchers stress that the overlying motive of volunteer tourists is

altruism; however, this study finds that the 'desire for a new experience' outweighs 'altruistic'

motives. The difference in these findings illustrates how volunteer tourists' motives can vary

and that some volunteer tourists may be more vacation-minded than volunteer-minded. These

volunteer tourists' attained experiences reveal three main themes: experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere communication and relationships.

Based on these attained experiences, the study explores the role of authenticity in them and found that existential authenticity (inter-personal and intra-personal), constructive authenticity, staged authenticity, sincerity, and intimacy all play a role. Some participants learnt more about their self and had life-changing experiences, which made them gain a better or different sense of their self or discover their identity. These experiences relate to existential authenticity. The sense of satisfaction attained by many of these participants shows signs of intra-personal authenticity. The study also demonstrates the role of staged authenticity with behind-the-scenes experiences important to these volunteer tourists. Ideas of constructive authenticity relate to when some of the participants experienced the host destination differently from their beliefs and expectations. Lastly, notions of sincerity and intimacy, linked to notions of interpersonal authenticity, are significant in the context of volunteer tourists' genuine communication and relationship forming with members of the local community and fellow volunteers. Based on these results, this study concludes that authenticity plays an important role in volunteer tourists' experiences and that this helps differentiate volunteer tourism from other tourism experiences.

Keywords: volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists, perceptions, experiences, sincerity, authenticity.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1   Introduction

Although volunteer tourism is a debated concept, it is becoming increasingly popular.

Likewise, notions of authenticity in tourism research are highly debated, but they still prove

valuable to the tourism industry. Despite the increased literature about authenticity in the

tourism industry and the increased interest in volunteer tourism research, the literature has yet

to combine the two ideas to any great extent. Therefore, this study explores the volunteer

tourism phenomenon, as well as explores the role of notions of authenticity in volunteer

tourists' experiences.

Volunteer tourism has become a phenomenon in recent years due to some tourists' increasing

concerns about the environment and Western society's push for social responsibility (Uriely,

Reichel, & Ron, 2003). While researchers argue that "tourism often leads to the exploitation

of host communities, their cultures, and environments" (Brown & Morrison, 2003, p. 75),

some researchers suggest that the volunteering component in volunteer tourism experiences

can add value to an industry that represents consumer capitalism at its worst (Wearing, 2001).

Although volunteer tourism itself has its critics, this niche tourism seems to represent a shift

away from 'normal' tourism activities that can exploit the host community to activities where

the tourist can give back to the local community or environment. While volunteer tourism

also includes tourist components, it has its "roots in volunteerism" where tourists offer their

time in order to participate in goodwill activities (Novelli, 2005, p. 184). Because of

volunteer tourism's increasing popularity in the last decades, it has caught the interest of

tourism researchers who have begun to investigate this niche market. Previous researchers

(Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Mustonen, 2006; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Zahra

& McIntosh, 2007) explore volunteer tourism by focusing on one particular type of volunteer

tourist or particular volunteer tourism organisation, such as Habitat for Humanity; yet, little research (Brown & Lehto, 2005) explores a variety of volunteer tourism experiences. With the aim of adding to the literature, this study explores the volunteer tourism phenomenon by focusing on a variety of volunteer tourism trip types in order to explore themes found from more diverse perspectives and experiences. The exploration includes an investigation of the types of opportunities in which the study's volunteer tourists have participated, why they have participated in volunteer tourism, and what they have gained from their volunteer tourism experiences.

Of particular interest in this dissertation is the exploration of the connection between volunteer tourism and notions of authenticity. Like the volunteer tourism industry, notions of authenticity are also currently of interest to tourism researchers. While authenticity has been written about extensively, only in the last two decades has the concept been increasingly included in the tourism industry (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). In fact, it has been suggested that the tourism sector has become largely controlled by notions of authenticity (Taylor, 2001). 'Notions of authenticity' is a term used throughout this dissertation to represent the derivatives of authenticity that are useful to this study, such as constructive authenticity, existential authenticity (intra-personal and inter-personal), staged authenticity, and notions of sincerity and intimacy. Pearce and Moscardo (1986) state that the concept of authenticity is useful to both tourism researchers and tourists because it helps them debate and determine the meaning and importance of tourism experiences. Taylor (2001) argues that the concept of authenticity is only valuable when someone notices that an experience may not be 'authentic.' Thus, if notions of authenticity are increasingly controlling the tourism industry, it can be safe to say that some tourists still value authentic tourism experiences, and that notions of authenticity are still valuable to tourism researchers.

It is believed that notions of authenticity play a role in what volunteer tourists attain from their experiences. For example, Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) study shows that volunteer tourists in New Zealand gained experiences relating to self, experiences of Maori culture, and experiences of their interaction and relationships with their Maori hosts. Wearing and Neil (2000) also found that volunteer tourists gain a greater awareness of self and are able to re-create their identities. Additionally, Broad's (2003) research says that volunteer tourists gain experiences of the local culture by going into local homes and seeing things that many other tourists never see. The question is how do notions of authenticity play a role in these findings? This dissertation seeks to answer this question. This study does not aim to discover if volunteer tourism is a more 'authentic' form of tourism, rather the purposes of this dissertation are to explore a variety of volunteer tourism experiences and to explore the role of authenticity in what volunteer tourists attain from those experiences.

This dissertation focuses on volunteer tourists, rather than volunteer tourism operators, who pay to volunteer and travel to a location other than their local community. Due to time and resource limitations, this dissertation only studies nearby volunteer tourists in New Zealand and focuses on short-term volunteer tourists who participated in projects of one week and up to one year in length. Additionally, arguing the definition of volunteer tourism and debating the definition of authenticity is beyond the scope of this research. Because Wearing's (2001) definition of volunteer tourism is so commonly used, as the literature review states, this dissertation uses the definition as the basis for understanding the concept of volunteer tourism. Likewise, notions of authenticity are used according to definitions created by previous researchers.

1.2   Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this dissertation are formed on the basis that little volunteer tourism research explores a variety of volunteer tourism experiences, and that the literature has yet to explicitly explore notions of authenticity in volunteer tourists' attained experiences. The main question for this dissertation is what is the role of authenticity in volunteer tourism experiences? This dissertation first seeks to explore the opportunities, motives, and attained experiences of the study's volunteer tourists. Then, the dissertation will look to answer the main question by exploring the role of authenticity in those attained experiences.

Specifically stated, the research aims and objectives are:
- To explore a variety of volunteer tourism experiences.
  - To investigate the types of opportunities in which the study's volunteer tourists participated.
  - To explore why they have participated in volunteer tourism.
  - To investigate what they have gained from their volunteer tourism experiences.
- To explore the role of authenticity in their attained experiences.

1.3   Structure of the Dissertation

In order to fulfil this study's aims and objectives, Chapter Two of the dissertation reviews literature to give a background to the research. Section 2.2 discusses the concept of volunteer tourism in relation to its definition and its increasing popularity. This section also examines common volunteer tourism experiences, according to the literature, such as activity types, trip lengths, trip destinations, current examples of volunteer tourism organisations, and volunteer tourists' motives. Benefits and criticisms of volunteer tourism are also included in this

section. Section 2.3 discusses notions of authenticity to highlight a few of the derivatives of the concept that are useful to this study. This section focuses specifically on the notions of constructive authenticity, existential authenticity (inter-personal and intra-personal), staged authenticity, and notions of sincerity and intimacy. Section 2.4 reviews previous volunteer tourism research to illustrate how notions of authenticity can play a role in volunteer tourists' experiences. Chapter Two concludes with a critical discussion of 'authentic' volunteer tourism experiences and a summary of the main points of the literature review.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology to fulfil the research aims and objectives. Section 3.2 explains why qualitative, intensive, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method to explore volunteer tourism experiences. The next sections discuss how the sample was selected and how the interview schedule was designed. Section 3.5 illustrates the profile of the sample at the time of the interview, as well as reveals the interview process. Section 3.6 explains how the data was analysed, and then Chapter Three concludes with limitations to the study.

In Chapter Four, the dissertation discusses the results of the study in relation to the study's objective – to explore volunteer tourism experiences. Section 4.2 states the profile of the study's volunteer tourists at the time of their trip and compares the results to the volunteer tourism literature. Section 4.3 outlines the types of opportunities in which they have participated, such as the location of their trip, their activity types, the duration of their trip and their volunteering component, and the types of organisations they used. These results are compared to previous research in this section. In Section 4.4, this dissertation reveals simplified motive themes for why the participants went on their volunteer tourism trips, compares the findings to the literature, and examines differences in participants' motives based on their demographics and volunteering background. Only one possible trend is

revealed from the data. Section 4.5 of this chapter reports what the volunteer tourists attained from their experiences. These experiences are summarised into three main themes: experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere communication and relationships. Each theme is explained and supported with quotations from the interviews. These themes are compared to previously reviewed literature in Chapter Five. Lastly, Chapter Four concludes with a summary of participants' responses about participating in another volunteer tourism trip.

Chapter Five contains the study's discussion section where the role of authenticity is explored in what the study's volunteer tourists attained from their experiences. For each of the revealed themes (experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere communication and relationships), the chapter summarises the study's findings, compares the findings to previous volunteer tourism research, and explores the role of authenticity in the volunteer tourists' experiences. Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of the participants' perceptions of what sets volunteer tourism apart from their other non-volunteer tourism experiences.

The dissertation concludes in Chapter Six with a summary of the study's major findings for each of the aims and objectives. The study's main research question is also answered. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations of the study and suggests future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

The literature review's first section discusses the concept of volunteer tourism in order to provide an understanding of this niche tourism market for this study's further exploration. The review begins with the history of volunteer tourism, including its increasing popularity, and defines the concept according to the literature. This section also examines common volunteer tourism opportunities, as well as common motives for volunteer tourists, and outlines the main benefits and criticisms of volunteer tourism. Section 2.3 of the literature review describes theories of authenticity in the tourism industry, and specifically reviews literature on the notions of constructive authenticity, existential authenticity (intra-personal and inter-personal), staged authenticity, and sincerity and intimacy. Section 2.4 reveals how authenticity plays a role in previous volunteer tourism research, and the next section discusses criticisms of 'authentic' volunteer tourism experiences. Finally, the literature review concludes and leads into the dissertation's primary research.

2.2   Volunteer Tourism

The growth of alternative tourism has prompted the emergence of many different niche markets, including 'volunteer tourism,' which is sometimes referred to as 'voluntourism.' Volunteer tourism began in the late 20th century when both volunteer organisations and international tourism had significant growth (Novelli, 2005). In the voluntary sector, institutions such as the Red Cross relied on volunteers to "address social problems and create social good" (Novelli, 2005, p. 185). Mass tourism was growing at a high rate and exposing tourists to cultures around the world. During the 1980's, tourism 'labels' such as eco-tourism, responsible tourism, and sustainable tourism began to emerge as an alternative to mass

tourism, and the media exposed a global division of the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the world providing a global exposure of voluntary sector organisations (Novelli, 2005). The macro-trend of increased environmental awareness and of global need (Uriely et al., 2003) forced these volunteer organisations to compete for limited funds (Novelli, 2005). Consequently, the volunteer tourism industry was created when volunteer organisations teamed up with tour operators to create an adventure combined goodwill holiday in order to find new ways to promote their causes (Novelli, 2005). These charitable organisations had to find new ways to increase their revenue; and at the same time tour operators and many other businesses tried to blend in with the trends of ethical and social responsibility (Novelli, 2005).

Because of these continuing trends, the volunteer holiday concept has had considerable growth since the mid-1980s, which is illustrated by the increasing number of volunteer tourism organisations (Brown & Morrison, 2003). For example, Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) recently created a subsidiary company called Addventure VSA for tourists to work with a local community in a developing country, as well as for the tourists to gain relationships and learn more about the local community's culture. Even the large-scale company Travelocity created the Travel for Good aid programme that promotes people taking trips to participate in a volunteer activity. Travelocity Vice President Dan Toporek acknowledges the popularity of volunteer tourism and thinks that the industry is a "definite trend that is growing by leaps and bounds" ("Big rise in voluntourism," 2007, p. 8).

In fact, a book on *Volunteer vacations* by Bill McMillon, Cutchins, and Geissinger, listed 75 volunteer tourism organisations in 1987, and by the 2003 edition, 275 organisations were included (Brown & Lehto, 2005). The growth in volunteer projects, the variety of destinations promoted, the range of target markets, and the array of organisations involved

(charities, tour operators, and private agencies) have created this 'mass niche' in a short timeframe (Novelli, 2005).

Volunteering abroad has become a popular trend due to the media's promotion of celebrities volunteering overseas. Angelina Jolie's aid work and Bono's aid work has encouraged the concept of volunteering abroad in society. Likewise, the gap year, a popular phenomenon in the last ten years (Simpson, 2004), seems to promote the concept of volunteer tourism. Generally younger adults take a gap year between school and university or as a career break in order to participate in different types of work, travel, and volunteering opportunities (Simpson, 2004). Like volunteer tourism, the gap year seems to combine the self-gratification of tourism with the altruism of development work, and provides an opportunity to explore the Other (Simpson, 2004). Prince William's gap year in Chile and Prince Harry's in Malawi has further promoted the gap year and overseas volunteer work (Novelli, 2005). Consequently, through celebrity aid work and the gap year phenomenon, the value of volunteer tourism experiences has increased in society.

2.2.1 Volunteer Tourism Defined

Volunteer tourism can be associated with a post-Fordist shift in tourism, where Westerners desire something different than the usual mass tourism packages (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Volunteer tourism has been an interest to tourism researchers in the past two decades and has been given many different definitions. Wearing's (2001) definition is quoted most often. He defines volunteer tourism as applying to:

> those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake
> holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in

society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment (p. 1).

The definition of volunteer tourism is debated frequently in literature. Lyons (2003) argues that not everyone who is involved in volunteer tourism considers themselves volunteers and/or tourists. Other researchers argue that the definition of volunteer tourism should include "volunteer hosts" or "members of the local community who volunteer in the tourism industry," such as senior citizens volunteering in museums, or youths digging in archaeological sites (Uriely et al., 2003, p. 59). While volunteer hosts and volunteer tourists are similar in that they both give significant time and contributions and share altruistic motives, it is argued that the two groups differ. While both groups work for free, volunteer tourists usually pay up front expenses that contribute to the volunteer project or organisation, which sets them apart from volunteer hosts (Holmes, Lockstone, Smith, & Baum, 2007). In fact, volunteer tourists usually pay more to volunteer while on holiday than what they would pay on a 'normal' holiday to the same location (Wearing, 2001). Host volunteers also usually volunteer within their community, while volunteer tourists travel to another destination in their own country or abroad (Holmes et al., 2007).

Novelli (2005) says that the concept of volunteer tourism links to many other separate but somewhat related categories of tourism: social tourism, cultural tourism, alternative tourism, ecotourism, moral tourism, responsible tourism, charity tourism, and serious leisure. Wearing (2001) also defines volunteer tourism as encompassing several other niche tourism markets under the alternative tourism category. Figure 1 illustrates Wearing's (2001) concept of volunteer tourism.

TOURISM

Mass tourism
(Conventional, standard, large-scale tourism)

Alternative tourism

Cultural   **Educational**   **Scientific**   **Adventure**   **Agritourism**
(rural, farm, ranch)

Volunteer tourism

Nature tourism or ecotourism
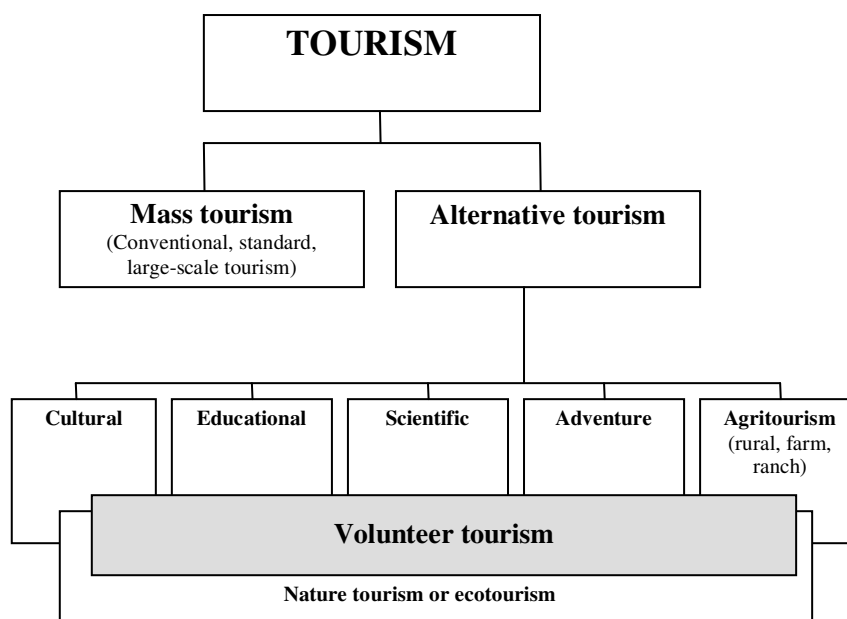
Figure 1: Wearing's Definition of Volunteer Tourism

Source: From Wearing, 2001, p. 30.

Some volunteer tourism companies are considered in line with what is called 'responsible travel' or 'responsible tourism.' Responsible tourism, as stated by the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT), involves tourism that attempts to minimise negative environmental, social and cultural impacts, and generates greater economic benefits for local people (ICRT, 2003, as cited in Weeden, 2005). Some alternative forms of tourism, such as volunteer tourism, focus on social and environmental issues rather than profits, and seek to lessen the negative effects on the local communities (Medlik, 1993, as cited in Scheyvens, 2002b). As with any tourism organisation or company, when volunteer tourism companies follow along the lines of responsible tourism, they can help lessen the negative effects of the consumer-driven tourism industry. Although there are plenty of tourism companies who knowingly exploit local communities, evidence exists that there are tourism companies who desire to increase global understanding and educate Westerners on the issues of global poverty and justice (Scheyvens, 2002a). For example, some companies report that they educate their participants about the culture and customs of the local community prior to arrival, and make sure that control over the volunteer projects remains with the local people

(Volunteer Service Abroad, 2006). Some tourism companies also pay attention to other details like environmental and economic issues relating to the local community, and use local public transport to minimise use of special tourist vehicles and fuel (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2006).

Statistics for the whole volunteer tourism sector are difficult to find; however, the specific studies on certain volunteer tourism organisations or types of volunteer tourists give a good idea as to the types of people who participate in volunteer tourism. Stoddart and Rogerson's (2004) research on Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HHSA) shows that the majority of participants' ages for this volunteer tourism organisation are younger (20 to29-years-old) or older (50 to 59-years-old). An overall age of most volunteer tourists is difficult to obtain because of the numerous specific studies done on one type of volunteer tourist or one type of volunteer tourism organisation (Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007); but Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) research says that volunteer tourists, overall, tend to be younger. With the variety of volunteer tourism organisations that continue to emerge, there seems to be "no limits to the opportunities that exist for volunteers of all ages and with all different kinds of skills and qualifications" (Brown & Morrison, 2003, p. 77).

2.2.2 Volunteer Tourism Projects and Activities

Research conducted in 2005 found that the *Goabroad.com* volunteer tourism website lists 289 different volunteer organisation with 698 projects in 156 countries (Novelli, 2005). A current search on the website brings up 3,036 volunteer projects around the world (Coppage, 2007). The volunteer tourism projects can be found in many different disciplines, such as archaeology, biology, construction, teaching, and conservation (Brown & Lehto, 2005). Volunteer tourism includes an array of activities, such as scientific research (land, water, and

wildlife), conservation projects, medical assistance, economic and social development (agriculture, construction, and education), and cultural restoration (Wearing, 2001). So, volunteer tourists can be found doing anything from "mass eye surgery operations to constructing a rainforest reserve" (Wearing, 2001, p. 2). In McMillon's newest version of his book *Volunteer vacations*, he categorises volunteer tourism project activities into the following types: administration; agriculture; archaeology; community development; construction; development disabilities; economic development; education; historical preservation; human rights; legal; medical/health; museums; natural conservation (land); natural conservation (sea); orphans; political action; professional/technical assistance; rural development; scientific research; social justice; trail building and maintenance; women's issues; and youth (McMillon, Cutchins, & Geissinger, 2006). Novelli (2005) states that the most frequently cited volunteer tourism activity is community welfare followed by teaching. Community welfare may be a much needed volunteer tourism activity in host countries because community welfare involves work addressing problems facing the whole local community, such as diseases or conflict (Novelli, 2005). While some organisations provide a whole array of activities for different types of people, some organisations focus on a certain type of volunteering (e.g. Earthwatch's conservation and research goals) or a certain type of volunteer tourist (e.g. Child Family Health International's focus on medical staff) (Brown & Morrison, 2003).

2.2.3 Volunteer Tourism Project Lengths and Locations

Projects can range from one week to over a year in length, but most volunteer tourists seem to opt for a project that finishes in less than six months (Novelli, 2005). Some argue that volunteer tourists who choose projects of over a year in length have a true altruistic motive versus volunteer tourists who choose a shorter timeframe (Novelli, 2005). According to

Lyons' (2003) comment stated earlier, it may be that these volunteer tourists are the ones who argue that they are not tourists, but volunteers.

Although volunteer tourism is usually found in destinations with poverty and severe social, political, and/or environmental issues that constrain and often prevent economic development (Novelli, 2005), volunteer tourism projects seem to be in every corner of the world. Volunteer tourism activities can be found in many different types of locations such as rainforests and cloud forests, biological reserves and conservation areas (Wearing, 2001). According to Wearing's (2001) research, some of the most popular volunteer tourism locations are Africa, Central America, and South America. In fact, Novelli's (2005) study of numerous volunteer tourism opportunities showed that many of the top ten destinations are African, Central and South American countries: Ecuador, Costa Rica, Ghana, Honduras, and Guatemala. India was the top destination for total number of volunteer tourism projects, and surprisingly two developed countries, Italy and England, also appear in this list at numbers ten and eleven, respectively (Novelli, 2005). Therefore, volunteer tourism takes place in both developing and developed countries. In regards to previous research on volunteer tourists' profiles, much of the volunteer tourism research seems based on only a segment of the world's volunteer tourists and does not encompass volunteer tourist profiles from around the world. Thus, it seems evident that the 'popular' volunteer tourism destinations, as shown in Wearing's (2001) and Novelli's (2005) literature, may depend on the area where the research is being conducted.

2.2.4   Examples of Current Volunteer Tourism Organisations

Organisations that provide volunteer tourism experiences are ones that usually provide international support and sponsorship for the implementation of research projects and community development (Wearing, 2001). Earthwatch Institute and Habitat for Humanity are

just two of these types of organisations. Earthwatch Institute includes a diverse group of people, including scientists, educators, students, business people, and resolute explorers, who work as a team to attain the fullest benefit from scientific expeditions (Alexandra, 2007). This volunteer tourism organisation gives participants an opportunity to work on scientific field research or conservation projects and gain insight and benefits from scientific expeditions.

Habitat for Humanity International also gives people the opportunity to volunteer and sightsee on the same trip (Brown & Lehto, 2005). This organisation focuses on construction type activities all around the world. The Christian-based Habitat for Humanity South Africa works to eliminate poverty by providing simple, decent, healthy shelters to the poor in the South African local communities (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). According to the Habitat for Humanity website, their Global Village programme allows tourists to make their holiday more meaningful by "exploring new lands and cultures while building houses and hope" by working alongside "members of the host community, raising awareness of the burden of poverty housing and building decent, affordable housing worldwide" (Fuller, 2007). To date, Habitat for Humanity International has built more than 225,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1 million people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter (Fuller, 2007).

2.2.5 Motives of Volunteer Tourists

Zahra and McIntosh (2007) and Mustonen (2006) argue that volunteer tourists may be distinct from other tourists in that their primary and most important motivation is altruism rather than 'escapist' tourist motives. In fact, Brown and Morrison (2003) say that the only skill required by many of the volunteer tourism organisations is the desire to help others. On the other hand, it is argued that altruism may not be volunteer tourists' primary motive considering they

are volunteers, as well as tourists. Like volunteers, volunteer tourists may be motivated through altruism. Like tourists, volunteer tourists may be motivated through the opportunities of excitement, fun, adventure, and meeting others (Gazley, 2001, as cited in Broad, 2003).

Wearing's (2001) volunteer tourism definition says that "for various reasons" a tourist can participate in a volunteer tourism trip, which seems to recognise that volunteer tourists are not all motivated primarily to help others (p. 1). Wearing (2001) acknowledges that although the overlying motive of most volunteer tourists is altruism, the experience is usually expected to be bi-lateral, meaning that the experience is hoped to contribute not only to the volunteer tourists' personal development, but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments of the host community (Novelli, 2005; Wearing, 2001, p. 1). A bi-lateral experience can also be applied to some volunteer tourism companies. While their first motive may be altruism, their second motive may be to make profits or to earn an income.

Brown and Lehto's (2005) research found that volunteer tourists have four main motives: cultural immersion; giving back and making a difference; seeking camaraderie with fellow volunteers; and family bonding and education. In their study, participants wanted immersion in the local culture in hopes it would lead to connections with the local people, and the immersion did lead to relationships with the hosts for some participants. Interestingly, 'giving back and making a difference' is the only motive that does not seem the tourists expected something in return; however, 'giving back and making a difference' gave the volunteer tourists a sense of purpose, which seems to fulfil desires for self-satisfaction.

Other suggested motives for volunteer tourists include travel/adventure, personal growth, and cultural exchange/learning, among others. In a study of Youth Challenge International (YCI) volunteer tourists, altruism and travel/adventure ranked as the highest motivations (Wearing,

2001). While studying volunteer tourists' motives is valuable to research and this study, it should be pointed out that the needs of volunteer tourists, the images and attitude the tourists ascribe to a destination, and the social, cultural, and physical environmental influences all impact the volunteer tourist's motives to choose a particular project in a particular country (Stebbins & Graham, 2004).

With the debate on what constitutes volunteer tourism, and the fact that volunteer tourists seem to have different motives, researchers have tried to categorise the phenomenon. Brown and Lehto (2005) illustrate two different types of volunteer tourism: volunteer-minded and vacation-minded. These types of volunteer tourism depend on the participant's mindset. The vacation-minded form has grown in popularity, and it allows people to take leisure holiday trips with a small volunteering component as part of the itinerary. The volunteer-minded form requires people to volunteer for their whole holiday time. The vacation-minded form is also sometimes called a "mini-mission" or "mission-lite," where participants still have time to enjoy the sun, sea, and sand of a destination and participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component, as well as a cultural exchange with the host community (Brown & Morrison, 2003, p. 77). Both Brown and Lehto's (2005) and Brown and Morrison's (2003) research is beneficial to volunteer tourism because it keeps the idea alive despite the arguments about volunteer tourism's definition.

Not everyone is inclined to participate in volunteer tourism. One point to mention in this regard is that, as Brown and Lehto (2005) have illustrated, even within volunteer tourists' minds there exists a spectrum of personalities and motives. Not all volunteer tourists are motivated solely to help others. Secondly, a person's history, influential family and friends, or knowledge of volunteering practices may affect their desire to participate in volunteer tourism. Literature suggests that support (or lack of support) from friends, family, and

organisations was the biggest influence in volunteer tourism participation (McGehee & Santos, 2005). Lastly, volunteering on holiday implies work, and most people go on holiday to get away from work (McMillon et al., 2006). Additionally, many governments use volunteering as punishment for misdemeanours, so a volunteer holiday to some people may seem like a "disciplinary measure" (Asner, 2006, p. xiii). Therefore, volunteer tourism activities may not be the first choice for a traveller who wishes to take a break from a stressful life.

2.2.6   Volunteer Tourism Benefits

Despite any criticisms of volunteer tourism, the niche market is flourishing in the tourism industry and literature still boasts of its benefits. First, some believe that volunteer holidays are a worthy cause that can be fun, fulfilling, and an adventure that people can look forward to each year (Asner, 2006). A magazine article even praises these types of travel opportunities and says they are for "people looking to make their trips mean more than a few rolls of film" (Picone, 2006, p. 129). Some may see volunteer tourism as a powerful experience to learn about other cultures and to make the world a better place. To these people, volunteer tourism promotes global understanding, friendships, and world peace. Numerous studies have shown that volunteer tourism impacts the participants lives in deep and lasting ways (Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). Brown and Morrison (2003) state that volunteer tourists gain experience and a greater sense of accomplishment than other tourist excursions can ever provide. More benefits of volunteer tourism in this regard are presented in Section 2.4 of this literature review.

Secondly, volunteer tourism is considered by some to be a more sustainable and responsible tourism option. McIntosh and Zahra (2007) say that volunteer tourism may be a more sustainable form of tourism because it allows participants a more genuine encounter with a

host community and provides mutual benefits to both the host community and the tourists. Additionally, volunteers are desperately needed to help fill gaps for projects around the world (Asner, 2006). Volunteer-type tourism, according to Scheyvens (2002a), is not about changing tourists' lives as much as it is about creating relationships and facilitating global understanding. A story printed in a VSA magazine illustrates that a returning volunteer tourist understood from her experience why volunteers are still needed in developing countries. She said that her experience was not about control and teaching Western ways, but more about working with the local community and transferring skills (Anderson, 2007). In this circumstance, volunteer tourism does not seem to revolve around 'the West is best' mindset. Volunteer tourism can be about working alongside the locals and conducting projects according to how the locals would do them, or even just sharing tips of the trade.

McMillon, Cuthins, and Geissinger (2006) make a point that as globalisation spreads the people of the world become closer neighbours and are able to see each other's problems. This closeness can make some people feel as though they need to help others who are less fortunate. McMillon, Cuthins, and Geissinger (2006) argue that volunteering is one of the best ways to do this; however, it is important to outline the critical perspectives of volunteer tourism.

2.2.7   Criticisms of Volunteer Tourism

The literature raises several criticisms of volunteer tourism. Some people view volunteer tourism as just another packaged front to put tourism in a positive light (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, as cited in Scheyvens, 2002a). The following criticisms are not exhaustive and only discuss a few of the main issues.

First, it can be argued that tourism, including volunteer tourism, still causes a carbon footprint and can negatively affect the host community. Volunteer tourism not only includes volunteering activities, but also is a form of tourism, and tourism is consumption-based (Mustonen, 2007). For example, volunteer tourists must sometimes fly to destinations and be transported to remote village locations, which can affect the host destination's environment. Mustonen's (2007) research says that tourists may say they are worried about global issues, but they do not always consider these issues when booking a trip. Likewise, volunteer tourists may care about their impacts on the host destination, but when it comes time to book the trip, they may not always think about these circumstances. In addition, volunteer tourists may put their trust into untrustworthy volunteer tourism organisations who do not consider carbon footprint issues. Therefore, the volunteer tourist may unknowingly be creating more harm than their desired good for the host community.

Secondly, arguments can be raised about whether volunteer tourism truly helps the host community. It is debatable that some volunteer tourism holidays, especially the short-term projects, really contribute any good at all to the host community. Mustonen's (2006) argues that when volunteer tourists finally leave the host community, the local people have to learn to cope with their daily lives again without their aid. If a volunteer holiday is short in length, the host community may not have been helped at all by the quickly fleeting volunteer tourists. To exacerbate this issue, volunteer tourists can leave whenever they want because they are in fact just volunteers. In these situations, the relationship with the host community can be seen as "superficial" (Mustonen, 2006, p. 172). Another point to the argument is that participants may not always be well prepared before their volunteer tourism trip, which may just widen the gap between the volunteer tourists and those in need. One could consider volunteer tourism a way for the rich or the Westerners to satisfy their own desires by forcing their way

into the lives of the needy around the world, which is sometimes seen as a form of post-colonialism or neo-colonialism (Hall & Tucker, 2005).

When the rich or the Westerners travel to a host destination to help the local people, issues could arise as to whether the visiting volunteers' culture or the local community's culture is being presented at the host destination, and whether the host community's culture is being "written or re-written" (Fisher, 2004, p. 126). A host community may suffer from the demonstration-effect by their copying the culture of the visiting guests. As volunteer tourists move in to help the host destination, Western ideas and desires can alter the culture of the host destination through the demonstration effect to possibly that of the rich or Westerners (Fisher, 2004). For example, it could be argued that Christian outreach volunteers are clearly aimed at changing the culture of the host community by introducing their religion. In these circumstances, the volunteer activities can be seen as trying to re-write the host community's culture. While some tourism organisations focus on using tourism to help the world's needy, others are driven by expanding their markets and increasing their profits (Scheyvens, 2007). Consequently, tourism organisations do not always provide a positive basis to help a host community. Another point to this argument is that when volunteer tourists go into a community to make a difference, the difference may not always be desired by the local community, and the local community may not even have a decision in the matter. Each volunteer organisation, volunteer tourist, and host community scenario may bring a different answer to this issue, but it is something to consider.

2.3   *Authenticity in Tourism Research*

Some say that Heidegger originally founded the idea of authenticity; however, the place of authenticity in the tourism debate is largely due to Dean MacCannell (Pearce & Moscardo, 1986). Because of MacCannell's work, authenticity has been an orienting principle in tourism studies for the last two decades, and there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are people who write about it (Taylor, 2001). The numerous definitions of authenticity in tourism studies bring great debate from researchers. Despite all the debate, the concept of authenticity remains in tourism research because tourists still desire 'authentic' experiences, and tourism companies and tourism destinations are still promoting 'authentic' experiences. Wang (1999) explains that "authenticity is relevant to some kinds of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, which involve the representation of the Other or of the past," and urged that the concept of authenticity must be better understood to explain the many different facets of tourist motivations and experiences (p. 350).

While a large amount of literature exists in regards to notions of authenticity in tourism, this dissertation's literature review will focus particularly on constructive authenticity, existential authenticity (intra-personal and inter-personal), staged authenticity, and notions of sincerity and intimacy.

2.3.1   Object, Constructive, and Existential Authenticity

Wang (1999) outlines two dimensions of authenticity: authenticity of toured objects and authenticity of tourist experiences. Wang (1999) describes two types of authenticity relating to toured objects: object authenticity and constructive authenticity. Figure 2 illustrates Wang's Dimensions of Authenticity.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   Authenticity      │
                    └─────────┬───────────┘
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
    ┌─────────┴─────────┐           ┌──────────┴────────┐
    │      Toured       │           │     Tourist       │
    │      Objects      │           │   Experiences     │
    └─────────┬─────────┘           └──────────┬────────┘
       ┌──────┴──────┐                         │
┌──────┴──────┐ ┌────┴────────┐       ┌────────┴────────┐
│   Object    │ │ Constructive│       │   Existential   │
│Authenticity │ │Authenticity │       │  Authenticity   │
└─────────────┘ └─────────────┘       └─────────────────┘
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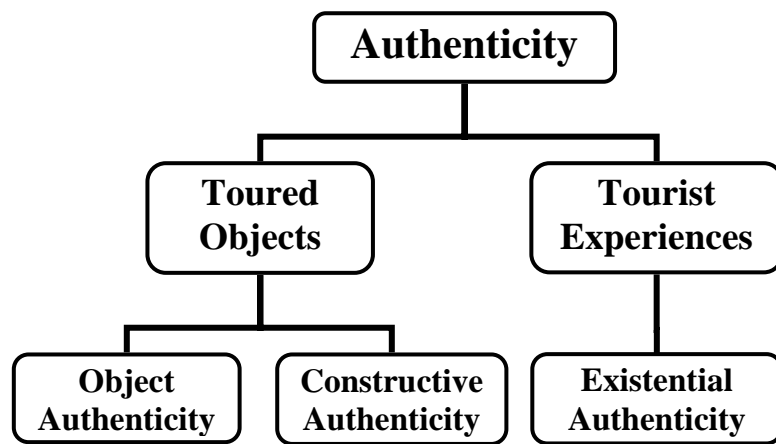
Figure 2: Wang's Dimensions of Authenticity

Source: From Wang, 1999.

2.3.1.1 Object Authenticity

Object authenticity refers to the "authenticity of originals" (p. 352) or involves a "museum-linked usage of the authenticity of the originals that are also the toured objects to be perceived by tourists" (Wang, 1999, p. 351). In object authenticity, the authenticity of tourism objects, such as dress, rituals, food, festivals, and art, are measured on whether local peoples created them through their traditions; therefore, if an object was created by the local people, it has a sense of genuineness and implies traditional culture and origin (Sharpley, 1994, as cited in Wang, 1999). For instance, when tourists travel to the Kingdom of Tonga, most want to know that the local crafts they are buying as souvenirs, such as the weaved mats, are made by the local people instead of made in another country. The mats are objectively authentic to the tourists if the materials originated in Tonga and were created according to Tongan traditions.

Wang (1999) also uses MacCannell's (1999) staged authenticity theory to discuss how a tourist's search for objectively authentic experiences sometimes makes them fall "victims of staged authenticity" (p. 353). Some tourists may think that certain tourism experiences and objects are objectively authentic, meaning that they believe they are seeing the 'real thing;' but what they are experiencing may just be a 'back region' that is actually a 'front region' set

up for visiting tourists (Wang, 1999). For example, tourists visiting Universal Studios are inclined to go on the back stage tour of the movie production rooms, when in fact they are viewing old movie production rooms that are no longer in use and are cleaned up for tourists' eyes. The tourists are, in a sense, tricked into thinking they are getting an objectively authentic experience. MacCannell's (1999) concept of staged authenticity is discussed later in this chapter.

Steiner and Reisinger (2006) question the concept of object authenticity because the concept does not explain many tourist's motivations and experiences. They argue that existential authenticity should be about passive reflection rather than just activities, and that object authenticity should be abandoned as a research concept in favour of existential authenticity. However, if researchers ignore the concept of objective authenticity, they are rejecting the fact that some tourists do care that the steel beams displayed at Ground Zero are in fact objectively authentic (Belhassen & Caton, 2006). While it is believed that object authenticity is an important notion in the tourism industry, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity are believed to relate more to the experiences of volunteer tourists. Thus, more detail is given to reviewing literature on these topics.

2.3.1.2 Constructive Authenticity

Some tourists look for a symbolically authentic tourism experience or tourism objects (Wang, 1999). Wang describes this type of authenticity as 'constructive authenticity.' Tourism experiences and objects can appear authentic to tourists because they are authentic in terms of the tourists' socially constructed perspectives, points-of-view, and beliefs (Wang, 1999). Unlike object authenticity, constructive authenticity is not an objectively measurable authenticity because what is authentic depends on the context and ideology of the tourist,

meaning that constructive authenticity can involve what a tourist expects or even dreams up about a tourism experience or object (Wang, 1999).

Bruner's (1994) ideas, which are used by Wang (1999), argue that the tourist destination is "generative" and allows visitors to attain their own meanings for a site (Bruner, 1994, p. 409). The meaning of tourism sites can differ between cultures. The Hiroshima Peace Park, for example, may have a different meaning for Japanese tourists versus American tourists. Bruner (1994) also says that "all cultures continually invent and reinvent themselves" and that 'authenticity' evolves and changes into what is considered proper and appropriate for the new generation (p. 407). Thus, the Hiroshima Peace Park may have a different meaning for younger Japanese tourists versus older Japanese tourists because the standards of generations change, and what a generation considers 'authentic' changes. In addition, each individual tourist creates their own meaning for tourism sites based on what relates to their lives and experiences (Bruner, 1994). So, the important issue is that the public is complex containing some people who are more aware of global issues, more knowledgeable, or even more sceptical of some issues than other persons (Bruner, 1994).

The ideas of constructive authenticity come into play in Bruner's (1994) research at the New Salem Historic Site, an outdoor reconstructed museum where United States President Abraham Lincoln lived in the 1830s. His research says that some visitors to this historic site knew that what they were experiencing was not objectively authentic; but they felt that their experience let them have a look into the lives of people in the 1830s, even if this experience was based on what 'historic authorities' perceive as authentic. His research also found that some tourists had to re-construct their idea of an authentic experience when their expectations of the New Salem Historic Site differed from what they found. Interestingly, his research revealed that while many visitors desired a simple life, they were not willing to sacrifice the

modern conveniences, such as flush toilets, they had grown accustomed to. Thus, tourists may want an authentic experience, but not so authentic that they would have to revert to a harder lifestyle.

Bruner's (1994) argument that authenticity changes for each generation is interesting because one of the main criticisms of authenticity is that its definition can not be agreed on. The meaning of authenticity, as used in the tourism industry, is varied making it confusing for tourism companies, as well as tourists. Some researchers say that the term 'authenticity' is "unstable" and should be replaced by other terms such as genuine, actual, real, and true (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 66). On the other hand, other researchers disagree and say that the numerous flexible definitions and meanings of authenticity are useful to tourism research (Belhassen & Caton, 2006). Other disciplines also argue over the concept of authenticity. The concept of 'authenticity' for the *World Heritage Convention in 1994* includes the aspect that

> All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must [be] considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong ("The Document of Nara 1994," 1994).

Thus, like Bruner (1994), the heritage preservation industry accepts that authenticity is generative and will be continually adapted depending on the context. Another point to this quotation in relation to constructive authenticity is that 'authenticity' should be judged within the cultural background that it is from. Taylor (2001) also argues that "if the concept of authenticity is to have any legitimate place in discussions of culture, its definition must rest with the individuals who 'make up' that culture" (p. 14).

2.3.1.3 Existential Authenticity

The concept of existential authenticity relates to the authenticity of tourist experiences, and is a major focus of this dissertation for later application to volunteer tourism. While Wang's (1999) objective and constructive authenticity relate to whether a toured object is objectively or symbolically authentic, 'existential authenticity' relates to the internal feelings a tourist gets from tourism activities (Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity, according to Wang (1999, p. 352), "can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects," but refers to a "potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities," and a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself (p. 358). For example, Wang (1999) argues that in some activities such as camping, walking, or wilderness solitude, tourists do not care about the authenticity of toured objects; instead, they care about finding their 'authentic selves' with the aid of those activities. Steiner and Reisinger (2006) say that existential authenticity refers to "a human attribute signifying being one's true self or being true to one's essential nature" (p. 299), and that existential authenticity relates to "what it means to be human, what it means to be happy, and what it means to be oneself" (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 300). Thus, being in touch with oneself, knowing oneself, and living one's own life is being authentic (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Even if objects, whether contrived or real, play a part in a tourist's experience, it is the existentially authentic feeling the tourist gets from the tourist activity that makes the experience authentic.

Existential authenticity can be seen in the guided climbing experiences to the top of Mt. Everest. Some people may feel that a climber who pays a guide to take them to the summit of the world's highest peak is not having an authentic experience at all. Jon Krakauer, author of the book *Into thin air*, remarks how commercialised Mt. Everest has become. He says that the mountain is being climbed by the rich who would not even be able to climb Mt. Rainier on

their own (Krakauer, 1997). Sir Edmund Hillary, as this book acknowledges, says Mt. Everest seems to lure climbers, and that many climbers, in pursuit of their own satisfaction, have left other climbers to die on the mountain. On the other hand, an experience such as climbing Mt. Everest is seen by others as similar to a pilgrimage, and that some climbers truly experience a sense of spirituality or transformation when they climb. One can argue that the tourist is in a 'special state of Being' and is being true to 'one's essential nature' (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). After all, "mountain climbing is ultimately an every-man-for-himself sport" and even though successful mountain climbing requires a team of people, "ultimately, a climb comes down to an individual's personal endurance, experience, and competence" (Rosen, 2007, p. 149). Tourism experiences can also be thought of in this way. In fact, some researchers argue that tourists gain insight from both contrived and real heritage settings, and that tourists create their own personal meaning, in which they actively produce their own meaningful environment and their own experiences of authenticity (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). As such, by climbing Mt. Everest, despite being with a guide, tourists may experience what it means to be challenged, to be put out of their comfort zone, or to be human according to their own personal meaning.

Within the concept of existential authenticity, Wang (1999) divides the concept into two different dimensions: intra-personal authenticity and inter-personal authenticity. Intra-personal authenticity revolves around internal feelings and relations to self and includes 'bodily feelings,' as well as an aspect of 'self-making' that is attained through tourist experiences. Inter-personal authenticity revolves around relations with other people and involves a sense of 'family ties' and a sense of 'touristic communitas.' These dimensions are discussed in further detail below.

2.3.1.3.1　*Intra-personal authenticity*

Wang gives two examples of intra-personal authenticity: 'bodily feelings' and 'self-making.'

The idea of 'bodily feelings' is that the body is a major organ that senses and feels during

tourism experiences and is a means for tourists to gain a sense of self from these feelings. For

example, the body during tourist experiences can feel "relaxation, rehabilitation, diversion,

recreation, entertainment, refreshment, sensation-seeking, sensual pleasures, excitement, play,

and so on", which are all "touristic contents" (Wang, 1999, p. 362). In some circumstances,

tourists must exercise control over their body in order to behave in acceptable ways

depending on the tourist situation. Using the example of Mt. Everest, tourists know they must

control their actions so they do not endanger themselves or other climbers. During their

climb, they may gain a sense of recreation, excitement, and diversion. A tourist who chooses

to climb Mt. Everest seeks this destination and activity in order to satisfy personal needs and a

personal sense of self. Consequently, bodily feelings encompass a tourist's search for self,

and the destinations and activities chosen during their travel are an outreach of their own

personal goals for their self. The 'self-making' aspect of intra-personal authenticity involves

self-identity or making of the self. In order to find their true identity, some tourists seek

experiences that are not found in their everyday mundane lives by turning to tourism and

travelling off the beaten path (Wang, 1999). The challenges and trials from these new

experiences can put a tourist out of their comfort zone, which can lead to tourists' discovery

and confirming or making of self.

2.3.1.3.2　*Inter-personal authenticity*

Wang (1999) gives two examples of inter-personal authenticity: 'family ties' and 'touristic

communitas.' 'Family ties' involves existential authenticity through family interaction and

bonding during tourism experiences. This means that family interaction, while on holiday, is

an opportunity to find one's identity and place in space and time. Family ties means that

tourists gain "a sense of authentic togetherness" with family members and the tourism experiences create "natural and emotional bonds, and a real intimacy in the family relationship" (Wang, 1999, p. 364). 'Touristic communitas' is a form of inter-personal authenticity that involves inter-personal relationships among tourists. 'Communitas' refers to when tourists have a sense of group intimacy because of their shared similarities during their trip together. Differences among tourists disappear and the tourists are ranked the same in their tourism activities (Wang, 1999). Tourists are of equal social status or rank to the other tourists because structures, existing roles, and identities for people fade. Consequently, this liminality and self-identity that 'starts from scratch' allows tourists to create, discover, or confirm their own existential authenticity

2.3.2 MacCannell's Staged Authenticity

MacCannell's concept of staged authenticity is important to this dissertation because of tourist's desire to see 'behind-the-scenes' and see the real life of the host community versus a performance. MacCannell (1999) argues that tourists want to "get off the beaten path" and "in with the natives," and that tourists are motivated by their desire for authentic experiences (p. 97). MacCannell's staged authenticity occurs when the host community adapts to modern times and performs their cultures for old-times-sake in institutionalised settings for tourist's eyes (Taylor, 2001). MacCannell uses Goffman's theory that social environments can be thought of as having "front and back regions" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 92). The arrangements of these front and back regions depend on a social division of the type of social performance that occurs in a place and the social roles found there (MacCannell, 1999).

Through MacCannell's staged authenticity, he demonstrates a continuum of situations from front to back stage. The 'front stage' is the "meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons," and is for the host community to be in the spotlight to create a show for

the interest of tourists (MacCannell, 1999, p. 92). The 'back stage' is the place where the host community members retire between performances "to relax and to prepare" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 92). The back stage is closed to audiences and outsiders, and is a place to conceal props or activities that may discredit the performance out front, which gives a sense of "mystification" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 93). In fact, "just having a back region generates the belief that there is something more than meets the eye; even where no secrets are actually kept, back regions are still the places where it is popularly believed the secrets are" (MacCannell, 1999, p. 93). Tourists who venture beyond the front region are being allowed to see the secrets kept from them in the back stage. A tourist's going back stage means being "one of them" and being able to see the "real" versus the fake show performed for tourist's eyes (MacCannell, 1999, p. 94).

Tourists can get closer to the locals by passing from front stage to back stage, enabling the tourists to further understand them (MacCannell, 1999). Additionally, a tourist's going back stage may provide more sincere involvement and interaction with the host community.

2.3.3 Sincerity and Intimacy

Some researchers have suggested that the term 'authenticity' offers culture as a thing of the past, as if it was dead (Taylor, 2001). The concept of sincerity requires culture to be in the present where tourists interact with it (Taylor, 2001). The concept of sincerity relates to Wang's (1999) notion of existential authenticity in that the notion of sincerity also has nothing to do with 'toured objects,' but has more to do with a state of sincere Being. In staged authenticity, in the absence of communication between tourists and the host community, the host community becomes strangers whose existence and reality are denied (Taylor, 2001). Through notions of sincerity, tourists become involved and interactive with the real life of the host community. The interaction is honest, truthful, and does not hide the

negative aspects of the host community's daily life. The host community is frank, open, and

heartfelt with the tourists, and the tourists act the same with the host community. Very little

literature exists about the concept of sincerity in tourism research. However, the following

definition by Taylor gives a good idea to what notions of sincerity in tourism involves:

> Sincerity, a philosophical cousin of authenticity, offers the basis for a shift in moral
> perspective: away from that which would locate touristic value in the successful re-
> production of "objective truths" – authenticities, and towards a view of tourism as
> embodying communicative events involving values important both to the social actors
> involved, and in themselves (Taylor, 2001, p. 8).

Taylor's definition means that sincerity in tourism moves away from thinking about whether

tourism experiences are real or contrived toward experiences where the tourist is being one's

true self to others. Sincerity involves an interactive sharing of experience between

participants and hosts within a tourism activity. This differs from intra-personal authenticity,

which refers to a relationship with oneself or being true to oneself (Taylor, 2001), but seems

to relate to inter-personal authenticity where the tourist experiences existential authenticity

through close connections with other participants. The notion of sincerity blurs the line

between who is on display and who is consuming the event, forcing the tourists to reveal

themselves and communicate (Taylor, 2001). "The gaze is returned" and "tourists and the

locals meet half-way in sincere cultural experiences" providing an opportunity for mutual

understanding (Taylor, 2001, p. 24). Tourists and hosts interact on the same level, which

makes the hosts feel de-commodified, and the tourists feel as if they are doing more than just

consuming a culture. According to Taylor, tourists will not be swayed by their previous

perceptions and beliefs of the local community, and a sincere cross-cultural encounter may

allow for the communication of the tourist's and the local community's identities and their

important values (Taylor, 2001).

Other research discusses the idea of 'intimacy' in tourism, which seems to relate to the notion of sincerity in tourism experiences. Trauer and Ryan (2005) adopt the work of Piorkowski and Cardone (2000) saying that intimacy and meanings for a place materialise from the interaction of the visitors and the host community. For example, the researchers remark that tourists obtain a high level of intimacy for a place when they are guided by a local who has "intense, longitudinal experiences" of that place (Trauer & Ryan, 2005, p. 482), meaning that being shown a destination from a local's perspective gives a tourist a better understanding of that place and a deeper connection and meaning for the destination. Intimacy, according to Trauer and Ryan (2005), involves a closeness that goes past the "embodiment of commodities," is profound and real rather than superficial, and requires enduring involvement (p. 484). Trauer and Ryan (2005) state that the notion of intimacy in tourism experiences relates to what love in long-term relationships involves, as defined by Sternberg (1998). Sternberg defines love in long-term relationships as involving a deep understanding of each other, the sharing of ideas, information, and personal ideas and feelings, emotional support to each other, giving help to others, personal growth and helping others with personal growth (Sternberg, 1998, as cited in Trauer & Ryan, 2005). This research summary just briefly highlights what intimacy in tourist experiences entails and further justifies how the notion of intimacy relates to the concept of sincerity.

Although the idea of sincerity and intimacy in tourist experiences is a grand idea, Taylor (2001) argues that many 'authentic' cultural experiences produce little personal contact between the guests and the hosts, and the experiences are usually only a small portion of a larger holiday itinerary. The more definitively planned the travel and the shorter the stay, the less chances tourists have to make sincere contact with local communities (Taylor, 2001).

Despite this criticism, notions of sincerity are apparent in volunteer tourists' experiences, as demonstrated in the following section.

2.4 Authenticity's Role in Previous Volunteer Tourism Research

Through previous volunteer tourism research, it is evident that theories of authenticity can play a role in volunteer tourists' experiences; however, none of the literature makes this connection. For example, McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) research on volunteer tourists at a marae in the Awatapu Holiday Programme illustrates that the volunteer tourists gained three layers of experience: experience relating to self; an experience of Maori culture; and experience of interaction and relationships with the Maori hosts. Theories of authenticity are seen in the findings of their research. First, Wang's (1999) concept of existential authenticity is evident in the 'experience relating to self.' Secondly, within MacCannell's (1999) concept of staged authenticity, his argument that tourists desire to get back stage is apparent in the 'experience of Maori culture.' Lastly, the concept of sincerity and intimacy is seen in the 'experience of interaction and relationships with the Maori hosts.' Using previous volunteer tourism research, the following sections outline evidence of existential authenticity, staged authenticity, and sincerity in volunteer tourists' experiences.

2.4.1 Evidence of Existential Authenticity in Previous Research

Because volunteer tourists have been reported to have experiences relating to self, it is suggested that Wang's concept of existential authenticity plays a role in volunteer tourists' experiences. Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) study demonstrates that returning volunteer tourists have shown evidence of cathartic experiences. They found that volunteer tourists had a "change in behaviour or emotional release" that improved their satisfaction of self, increased their confidence in their own capabilities, or caused them to have a more enriched

lifestyle and meaningful engagement with life (p. 115). They argue that these cathartic experiences also relate to the discovery of a person's role in the universe and society, and that these experiences are considered activities that create positive change for an individual's purpose in life (Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). Wearing and Neil's (2000) research and Wearing's (2001) research report that greater self-awareness and the refiguring of self and identity are the most significant occurrences in volunteer tourism experiences. Volunteer tourists in Stebbins and Graham's (2004) research gained a sense of purpose and concern for other people. Tourists reaffirm and create their identity by experiencing different cultures and by recognising their own place in time and space (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). The closer a volunteer tourist goes to a culture, the more aware they are of their place in space and time and of their own identity (Wearing & Neil, 2000).

Simpson's (2004) research illustrates stories about the things volunteer tourists realise they take for granted, and how the volunteer tourism experience gave the volunteer tourists insight into what life is like for others. For example, the students in Simpson's (2004) gap year research learnt that they are 'lucky' when they see the inequalities and differences encountered when abroad. This type of realisation aids in a volunteer tourist's awareness of his or her own identity and place in the world.

McGehee & Santos's (2005) research shows that volunteer tourists gain rich social networks and friendships in their volunteer tourism experiences that provide enlightenment, eye-opening new experiences, and personal changes to their lives. Volunteer tourists in Broad's (2003) research learnt more about their own identity and developed skills and confidence to handle challenging situations, such as "working in a foreign culture and climate, dealing with their emotions and working with others" (p. 68). The volunteer tourists became more relaxed and content and looked at the world differently as a result of their experiences (Broad, 2003).

According to Stebbins and Graham (2004) and Zahra and McIntosh (2007), volunteer tourists see their experiences as rewarding and providing a sense of satisfaction and deep personal fulfilment and benefits from their volunteer work. Through these previous studies, volunteer tourism seems to offer the potential to change a tourist's perceptions about society, their self-identity, their values, and their everyday lives.

The role of existential authenticity also appears when researchers discuss how volunteer tourism can create a greater awareness of the world's issues that can actually change volunteer tourists. McGehee & Santos (2005) state that people must experience social conflict first-hand in order to change or have a personal revelation. People do not change by being told to change; they change because of discovery through personal experiences (Gordon, 2002, as cited in McGehee & Santos, 2005). McGehee & Santos's (2005) research demonstrates that volunteer tourism can be a 'consciousness-raising experience' that will increase tourists' knowledge about social conflict, possibly causing more sympathy for an issue. They argue that volunteer tourism provides an opportunity for participants to be exposed to social injustice and environmental and political issues, which, in turn, increases their social awareness, sympathy, and support to change (or resist change in) some aspects of society. As in the gap year example, the students' feelings of being 'lucky' in regard to social inequalities can increase their social awareness, sympathy, and support for this issue (McGehee & Santos, 2005). This increased awareness, sympathy, and support can be an existentially authentic experience where the students find their 'authentic selves' or become more in touch with their place in time and space. McGehee and Santos (2005) also found that as people become more aware that they are part of a larger movement to help the world, they have a greater sense of the possibility for success and are more motivated to participate. Because of this, it can be argued that involvement in volunteer tourism can lead a volunteer tourist to be more in touch with oneself or to better understanding oneself, and possibly cause

the participant to re-negotiate his or her identity. In this respect, McGehee and Santos's volunteer tourism research illustrates how volunteer tourism experiences provide participants with an existentially authentic tourism experience.

2.4.2   Evidence of Staged Authenticity in Previous Research

Evidence exists that MacCannell's notions of staged authenticity are seen in volunteer tourists' experiences. While MacCannell suggests a continuum of six different situations from front to back stage, volunteer tourists' experiences relate to MacCannell's concept of tourists' desire to go back stage. Tourists, especially volunteers, want to encounter the Other (Mustonen, 2006). Research shows that volunteer tourists encounter and experience the Other behind the stage curtain for a more in-depth, daily life experience of the local community.

McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) volunteer tourism research at a marae in New Zealand illustrates how volunteer tourism experiences can satisfy tourists' desire to get back stage. Their findings show that participants experienced "real New Zealand people through a cultural encounter" and allowed them "to see how they live" (p. 5). Some tourists only view the Maori culture through a Haangii dinner or through the performance of the haka on stage, which only allows the tourist to experience the front stage region. By visiting the Maori in their own homes, or back stage, the participants were able to learn interactively about everyday, contemporary life for the Maori, such as the influence of "tribal gangs and drugs, cultural 'rules,' and the sense of community spirit" in the Maori culture (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007, p. 6). The volunteer tourists in their study got 'in with the host community' and experienced the present day lifestyles of the Maori instead of a staged performance, which gave the volunteer tourists a sense of being 'behind-the-scenes.'

Another example of volunteer tourists' going back stage is illustrated in Broad's (2003) research of the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project (GRP) in Thailand where the researchers found that participants experienced Thai culture and saw things that many other tourists never see. The volunteer tourists lived and worked under authentic Thai conditions (Broad, 2003). They went into local homes, and they went to cultural festivals where the Thai people explained to them the meanings associated with the events and their culture (Broad, 2003). The research states that these participants stayed around four months at this project in Thailand, which gave the participants more time to experience the culture compared to general tourists who stay an average of eight days (Broad, 2003). Not only did these participants see back stage, but also they gained an understanding of what they saw and had a better opportunity for more interaction and involvement with the host community.

2.4.3   Evidence of Sincerity and Intimacy in Previous Research

Notions of sincerity and intimacy seem to play a role in volunteer tourists' experiences based on the results of previous research. Broad (2003) says that volunteer tourists become different from other tourists because they have more sincere interaction with the host community. Brown & Lehto's (2005) research illustrates that non-verbal communication and bonding have occurred between the host community and the volunteers, and that the volunteers are able to "physically and emotionally immerse oneself in the local culture and community" (p. 487). They also found that camaraderie occurs with fellow volunteers, which is more evidence of sincerity and intimacy in volunteer tourism experiences. Taylor's (2001) research reports that tourists' experiences that are more sincere and interactive with the host community offer participants an "insight into a living culture" (p. 22). McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) study also illustrates the different experiences that volunteer tourists have with the local people compared to studies of cultural tourism, in general. They state that while cultural tourism allows tourists to gaze at the Other, volunteer tourism allows tourists to be more

creative and provides participants with more involvement and interaction. Although Taylor's (2001) research was not based on volunteer tourists' experiences, the researcher argues that tourists in situations of sincere communication are able to reveal their true selves during tourist activities through interactive and sincere communication with the local community. This allows the host community to gaze back at the tourist providing a true interaction between the host community and the tourists (Taylor, 2001).

Brown and Lehto's (2005) research shows that cultural immersion is possible through volunteer tourism and first-hand interaction with the local people because the participants "get acquainted" with the host community's lives and "make relationships" (Brown & Lehto, 2005, p. 488). The formation of relationships found in previous research during volunteer tourism experiences also illustrates the sincerity and intimacy of volunteer tourism. McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) research demonstrates that volunteer tourists are involved in "interpersonal narratives and relationships" that create a "creative cultural exchange," and the participants develop a "personally meaningful relationship" with the local peoples (p. 8). Stoddart and Rogerson's (2004) study reports that some participants wanted the world see them in a different light, and they desired cultural exchanges. Some researchers (Brown & Morrison, 2003; McMillon et al., 2006) believe that volunteer tourism can offer tourists and host cultures one-on-one exchanges and communication, which encourages understanding and an appreciation of other cultures, possibly decreasing the negative effects of globalisation.

2.5   *Authentic Volunteer Tourism Experiences?*

Volunteer tourism experiences may not always lead to a true encounter of the host community and their environment. For example, some projects are not sensitive to local needs and interests (Scheyvens, 2002b). Volunteer tourism projects that are not sensitive to local needs

and interests do not provide a good basis for sincere communication between the visitors and the host community. Because tourism in needy countries can add a much needed income to their economy, some tourism companies abuse their power and exploit the host community by skewing projects in the favour of their own interests (Scheyvens, 2002b). This not only can damage the culture of the host community, but also provides the host community with very little chance to present their true culture to the visitors. Tourism largely depends on the authenticity of cultures, such as shared meanings and associations, which make cultures unique; however, tourism may, in turn, threaten to destroy it (Taylor, 2001). Culture is "under attack" from late-capitalism because of the dilemma affecting, for example, Indigenous peoples (Taylor, 2001, p. 12). They are challenged "to cash in on a tourist boom and enhance their economic position while preserving a traditional way of life and conserving the natural resources that are integral to it" (Barber, 1992 as cited in Taylor, 2001, p. 12). So, commodifying culture and the environment place tradition and 'authenticity' in jeopardy; Taylor (2001) argues that tourism's staged authenticity of cultures is a major contributor to this danger.

Secondly, some projects have only a small amount of involvement with the host community or environment (Scheyvens, 2002b). Some projects are so short in length that it is thought impossible for the volunteer tourists to really have an authentic experience with the host community (Bruner, 1991, as cited in Broad, 2003; Scheyvens, 2002a). On short-term volunteer tourism adventures, the participant may be only contributing to a larger project, where the participant is unlikely to see any major differences for the host community. Thirdly, some volunteer tourism experiences do not explain the meaning behind a culture's events or traditions (Broad, 2003), which may not provide a truly authentic experience because the tourist does not understand or appreciate the culture.

2.6   Conclusion

Although the concept of volunteer tourism may be debated, it is no argument that this niche industry has grown and become more popular over recent years. Because of volunteer tourism's array of opportunities and its applicability to a variety of tourist motives, this form of tourism seems like an ideal alternative tourism option. Tourism researchers have taken interest in volunteer tourism; yet, little research explores a variety of volunteer tourism experiences. Like volunteer tourism, notions of authenticity may be continuously debated, but it is no argument that tourists and the tourism industry still find the idea of authenticity in tourism experiences valuable. Previous volunteer tourism research contains evidence that volunteer tourists' experiences may relate to notions of authenticity; however, as discussed, none of the volunteer tourism research has explicitly explored authenticity's role in volunteer tourists' experiences. Using qualitative intensive semi-structured interviews, this dissertation aims to add to the volunteer tourism literature by further exploring the volunteer tourism phenomenon, including the opportunities available to volunteer tourists and their motives for participating in volunteer tourism. This dissertation will also investigate the experiences attained by volunteer tourists in order to explore the role of authenticity in those experiences. The following chapter discusses the means of conducting this research based on the dissertation's aims and objectives.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter explains the rationale of the research method used, how the sample was selected, the design of the semi-structured interview schedule, a brief description of the study's sample and of the interview process, and how the data was analysed. A few limitations to the study are discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

3.2   Rationale of the Qualitative Research Method

Gaining an emic perspective, or the perspective of volunteer tourism experiences as seen by the volunteer tourists, is needed to fulfil this dissertations' aims and objectives (Patton, 2002). Exploratory research is valuable when a researcher desires to gain an understanding, discover important categories of meaning, or construct thick descriptions of a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Considering the research objectives, both quantitative and qualitative methods would research a person's point-of-view; yet, quantitative research relies more on measuring a person's point-of-view, while qualitative research seeks to understand it (Babbie, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005). Qualitative methods use detailed interviewing and observation techniques to explore meanings and gain impressions of subjects that do not need to be measured in terms of intensity, frequency, or quantity (Babbie, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005). Compared to the quantitative method that measures data from larger numbers of participants, the qualitative method tends to produce a large amount of detailed information about a specific context using a smaller number of participants, which increases the understanding of a specific context, but reduces the data's generalisability (Patton, 2002).

Some argue that qualitative data is unreliable, impressionistic, and not objective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), and that the researcher's personal interpretation is always evident in the qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2003). Although this criticism is fitting in certain contexts, using this fundamentally interpretive method requires the researcher's own conclusions about the data in order to make sense of emerging themes (Creswell, 2003). Based on the exploratory nature of this research and the limited time frame, a qualitative method was seen to be more appropriate and is consistent with previous studies of volunteer tourists' experiences (Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). It was felt that a quantitative method would not give adequate information to meet the research aims and objectives.

Intensive semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were considered the most appropriate qualitative research method to elicit rich, detailed information about the participants' volunteer tourism experiences in order to find possible themes in the data (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006a). Open-ended questions further allow the interviewee to respond without prescribed answers, which provides the researcher with a view of volunteer tourism from the perspective of a volunteer tourist (Patton, 2002). These types of interviews allow direct quotations that form the raw qualitative data, which reveals the interviewee's feelings and perceptions of their volunteer tourism experiences (Patton, 2002). As Babbie (2007) suggests, the semi-structured nature of the interview schedule allows for a more flexible, iterative, and continuous interview, which provides a more natural conversational-type interview (Lofland et al., 2006a).

3.3   Sample Selection Method

This study focuses on a variety of types of volunteer tourism experiences, which differs from most existing volunteer tourism studies (Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007), which research a particular type of volunteer tourist or volunteer tourism organisation. With the study's time constraints, the researcher felt it appropriate to conduct 20 in-depth interviews of previous volunteer tourists; however, this limits the generalisability of findings.

The researcher conducted the interviews during the spring and summer months of November and December 2007. Since the researcher is considered an 'outsider' in the volunteer tourism world, as suggested in qualitative literature (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006b), it was important to make contacts with volunteer tourists starting with contacts already known by the researcher. Thus, existing contacts were made through local church groups, Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA), and Lincoln University. To obtain volunteer tourism contacts from VSA, the researcher contacted the main VSA office initially through email, and then through a formal letter (Appendix 1) with the dissertation's research proposal attached.

Using the snowball sampling method, the researcher found additional volunteer tourist participants by asking the pre-established volunteer tourism contacts for more volunteer tourism contacts. Although snowball sampling usually provides questionable representativeness of a sample, this research was more exploratory in nature, making the snowball sampling method a suitable method to use (Babbie, 2007).

The researcher selected prospective participants based on criteria related to the scope of the research. Due to the continuously debated definition of volunteer tourism, prospective participants were chosen based on the most common definition of volunteer tourism as

defined by Wearing (2001), as discussed in the previous chapter. Participants were volunteer tourists who had already completed their volunteer tourism trip with a volunteering component of at least one week and up to one year in any discipline, occurring not more than ten years ago. The time limit criteria for prospective participants was hoped to give the study's interviewees a more recent recall of trip experiences and perceptions, which seemed to help during the interview process. In addition, the participant could not have been paid for the volunteer trip in any way, including a stipend, although some trips that included accommodation or food were accepted. The interviewees were selected to include both females and males, age 18 and older, with a good comprehension of the English language. In order to give the study a variety of volunteer tourism trips in regards to trip length, location, and discipline, the researcher actively sought volunteer tourists involved in different types of organisations and volunteer activities. The researcher felt that interviewing volunteer tourists with a variety of volunteer tourism experiences would provide data to fill a void in the existing volunteer tourism literature by exploring themes found from more diverse perspectives and experiences.

Prior to each interview, the researcher contacted each prospective participant by email or phone and explained how and why the individual was contacted, and then asked them questions to make sure they fitted the study criteria. The researcher outlined the study to the prospective participant by presenting and explaining the research information sheet (Appendix 2). The researcher asked the prospective participant if he or she would like to voluntarily participate in the study. If the participant agreed to participate, an interview date, time, and location were set up according to the participant's schedule. Of the contacted participants who fit the study's criteria, none refused an interview.

At each interview, the researcher gave the respondent the corresponding research information sheet. All of the information corresponding to each interviewee had a non-identifying ID number in case the participant later decided to withdraw from the study. Respondents were advised that they were free to refuse to answer any question they felt uncomfortable with, and asked if they had any questions about the nature of the study and their rights as a voluntary participant. The researcher recorded each interview for later transcription and analysis. In the end, a signed consent form was obtained from each participant, none of the participants withdrew their data from this study, and none of the respondents refused any of the interview questions.

This research was conducted according to the Lincoln University ethical guidelines. Anonymity and confidentiality was assured by using only pseudonyms in any written or oral presentations of this research. No individually identifying information for the participants, their volunteer projects, or their organisations was presented in any form. Any quotations from the interviews have been referenced using pseudonyms, an age range based on the participants' age at the time of their trip, and the participant's trip location in brackets.

3.4   *Interview Schedule Design*

Qualitative research requires a less structured interview schedule compared to quantitative research, which uses a more rigidly structured questionnaire (Babbie, 2007). This research used a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 3) to explore the experiences and perceptions of the volunteer tourists. As qualitative literature suggests, an interview schedule gives a slight structure to the interview without forcing the interviewee to choose pre-established responses (Lofland et al., 2006a). Although the interview schedule was usually followed to keep the research on track, the researcher did allow the participants to discuss

aspects of their trip that were unrelated to the interview schedule in case the participant brought up information the researcher had not previously considered.

The interview was designed to help answer the study's aims and objectives by exploring the experiences and perceptions of the volunteer tourists in regards to the types of opportunities that participated in, why they participated in volunteer tourism, and what they got out of their experience. In order to obtain this information, the semi-structured interview was split into three broad sections: demographics, volunteering, and volunteer tourism. First, the demographics section questioned the participants' age, occupation, family composition, and education to determine in later analysis if any of these demographics played a role in participants' motives. Secondly, the volunteering section asked the participant questions about his or her current and past general volunteering experiences to determine if these circumstances played any role in the data. Lastly, the volunteer tourism section included questions about why the participant was involved in the volunteer tourism project, the range of activities and opportunities he or she was involved in, what the participant hoped to get out of the experience, and what the participant perceived he or she attained from the experience.

3.5   Profile of Sample and the Interview Process

The researcher interviewed 22 previous volunteer tourists in 20 interviews. The participants were mostly of New Zealand origin, and all participants currently live in New Zealand as citizens or residents. Participants were only selected if they were 18 years or older at the time of the interview, and their ages ranged from 23- to 70-years old. Fourteen participants were female and eight were male. Two of the interviews contained a couple (male and female) that went on their volunteer tourism trip together. In both of these interviews, each person answered the interview questions with his and her own perceptions. In order to later analyse

any differences in participants' motives for going on their trip, a more in-depth profile of the sample at the time of their trip was needed instead of at the time of the interview. Chapter Four illustrates the results of the profile of the sample at the time of their trip in Table 1.

Interviews ranged in duration from 45-minutes to 95-minutes, although the majority of interviews were 50-minutes long. Most interviewees chose to be interviewed in their own homes, a few interviews took place at the interviewees' workplace, and three of the interviews took place over the phone because of the researcher's inability to travel to the respondent's home. The phone calls were placed over the internet and were recorded using internet-based digital voice recording software.

The researcher attempted to get a cross-section of participants by gender, length of volunteering, and type of volunteering; yet, a weakness should be mentioned. As previously stated, the sample was attained using the snowball method starting with contacts through a local church, the local university, and VSA; although, it should be noted that the majority of the interviewees, 13 of the 22, were attained through the local church due to widespread word-of-mouth and contact sharing. The researcher felt that despite the common link to the local church, all of the 13 respondents attained through the local church had a variety of different volunteer tourism trip lengths, destinations, and activities that were in line with the study's aims and objectives; however, the common link to the local church could have affected some of this study's results.

3.6   *Data Analysis*

The researcher analysed the qualitative open-ended interview data by first transcribing each interview word-for-word. The NVivo qualitative software programme was used to keep the

data and themes organised throughout the research. The transcribed interviews were analysed line-by-line for initial coding of emergent themes, which helped to condense and organise the data into themes relevant to the aims and objectives of this study. The initial coding themes were based on the literature review and based on what the researcher expected to find from the data (Lofland et al., 2006b); though the data was coded with a new theme if it did not appropriately fit the initial coding themes. Then, all of the initial themes were allocated into more focused main themes (Lofland et al., 2006b), which are explained and supported with interview quotations in the results, Chapter Four, of this dissertation. One criticism of the research method is that, due to time constraints, the researcher was unable to verify themes with the participants. Thus, the data was analysed and coded based on the researcher's perceptions of the data.

3.7   Limitations to the Study

As with most research, this dissertation was limited by resources and time. The resource limitations included money and participant availability. The funds to conduct this dissertation limited the researcher to interview participants in the Canterbury region, although a few phone interviews were possible of New Zealand participants outside the Canterbury area. Thus, this study involves perceptions of participants from mainly a New Zealand perspective. Another resource limitation is that the researcher has never participated in volunteer tourism and is considered an 'outsider' to the volunteer tourism world. Being an 'outsider' forced the researcher to get involved in the field through existing contacts. Hence, the discussion of the results is based only on the literature review and the researcher's knowledge gained during this research. Despite this being a limitation, the role of an 'outsider' during this research can be seen as an advantage. Being an 'outsider' has made it easier to gain exploratory knowledge and be more objective about volunteer tourism because the researcher could adopt

a 'learning' role during the interview process (Lofland et al., 2006b). Lastly, this research is

limited by time. The research timeframe allowed for only 20 interviews. Indeed, more time

would allow more interviews to find a saturation point in the data, and would allow the

researcher to have the interviewees verify the themes found in the interview data. Since this

research is exploratory in nature, the data takes only a preliminary look at the experiences and

perceptions of volunteer tourists. The researcher felt that exploring a variety of trip lengths,

trip types, and trip locations adequately fulfilled the research objectives and aims; however,

the size of the sample is a limitation to the study's objectives in that this study can only yield

exploratory results that are not generalisable to all volunteer tourists.

Chapter Four: Results - Exploring Volunteer Tourism Experiences

4.1   *Introduction*

This chapter contains the study's results of its exploration of a variety of volunteer tourists' experiences, and fulfils the study's objectives: to investigate the types of opportunities in which these volunteer tourists participated; to explore why they participated in volunteer tourism; and to investigate what they attained from their volunteer tourism experiences. First, Section 4.2 discusses the participants' profiles at the time of their trips and compares the results to the previously reviewed literature. Then, the study's results from the three specific objectives are addressed in order, and the first two objectives are compared to previous research. The last section of Chapter Four discusses the interviewees' responses about participating in volunteer tourism again in the future.

4.2   *Profile of Sample at the Time of their Trip*

The study's results involved 22 participants who, in total, spoke of 25 separate volunteer tourism trips. Table 1 illustrates the profile of the sample at the time of their trip and briefly displays their demographics, travel experience, local volunteering experience, and volunteer tourism experience.

Table 1: Profile of the Sample at Time of Their Trip

Age	
17 to 25-years-old	10
37 to 47-years-old	5
54 to 65-years-old	7

Sex	
Female	14
Male	8

Marital Status	
Single – no children/no children still at home	7
Married – no children/no children still at home	11
Married – with adult children still at home	4

Education	
Secondary	4
Tertiary	14
Post graduate	4

Travelled Abroad Before Volunteer Trip	
Yes	16
No	6

Local Volunteering Experience	
Volunteering runs in family	11
Has volunteered in the past	16
Currently Volunteers	12

Volunteer Tourism Experience	
Used a volunteer tourism organisation	20
Has gone on more than one volunteer tourism trip	6
Participated in volunteer tourism at least once prior to the 10-year benchmark	6

At the time of their volunteer tourism trip, the 22 participants ranged in ages from 17 to 65, but the majority were aged 25-years-old or less and 54-years-old and higher. Since interviews were set up through the snowball method, originally starting with mostly female pre-established volunteer tourism contacts, the gender numbers seem to have been skewed, as Table 1 illustrates. This could be attributed to the fact that women usually have more female friends; hence, they may be more likely to give contacts of their same gender.

Interestingly, the majority of participants had no children or no children living at home at the time of their volunteer tourism trip. The sample was well educated with 18 of the 22 participants having a tertiary education. Six participants had never travelled abroad prior to their volunteer tourism trip. Sixteen had previously travelled abroad mostly on trips that were not volunteer tourism related, but for pleasure, visiting friends and family, or business.

Twelve of the 22 participants currently volunteer locally in some capacity. In fact, one of the participants volunteered for the first time only upon returning from the volunteer tourism trip. For 11 of the participants, volunteering seemed to run in their family with at least one other immediate family member also participating in a form of volunteering. Six of the interviewees had participated in volunteer tourism at least once prior to the 10-year benchmark established for the purposes of this research. Six interviewees went on more than one volunteer tourism trip in the past 10 years. It must be noted that three of these six interviewees spoke of only one of their two volunteer tourism trips in the past 10 years because they felt both experiences were similar, which accounts for only 25 experiences for this research. In these interviews, these participants spoke of a volunteering experience that was not their first volunteer tourism experience, which could have affected their interview answers in regards to what they attained from their experiences. Lastly, only two of the 22 participants did not use a volunteer tourism organisation to do their volunteering abroad.

Although most research (Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Mustonen, 2006; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007) is conducted on a particular volunteer tourism organisation or type of volunteer, the ages of this study's participants can still be compared to the findings of those studies. Many of the participants in this study were aged 17 to 25-years-old, which is similar to Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) literature that volunteer tourists tend to be younger. The participants' ages in this study seem to follow a trend similar to Stoddart and Rogerson's (2004) Habitat for Humanity South Africa study where the two main categories of participants' ages were also younger (20 to 29-years-old) and older (50 to 59-years-old). Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) say that this could be because younger participants may have a desire for self-discovery, and the older participants may be in early retirement with the disposable income and savings to commit themselves to volunteer tourism trips. The lack of middle-aged volunteer tourists in this study could be attributed to family and career responsibilities that the younger and older volunteer tourists in this study did not have at the time of their volunteer tourism trips. Indeed, only four of the participants were married with adult children still at home at the time of their volunteer tourism trip. Additionally, this study used existing contacts at a local church and the researcher's university. Thus, it could be argued that the existing contacts from a small university town would produce further contacts that were mainly younger in age.

4.3   Types of Opportunities in Which These Volunteer Tourists Participated

The first objective was to investigate the types of opportunities in which the volunteer tourists participated. The sample's variety of experiences, rather than a specific type of volunteer tourist or volunteer tourism organisation, allowed this study to look at a wider range of volunteer tourism trip locations, lengths, and activities. A criterion for sample selection was

experience of a volunteer tourism trip no more than 10 years ago; so, all of the trips took place within the past ten years. Since a few of the interviewees went on more than one volunteer tourism trip in the past 10 years, it must again be noted that the results involve 22 participants, in total, who spoke of 25 separate volunteer tourism trips.

4.3.1 Location

This research found that the majority of the participants' volunteer tourism trips occurred in South East Asia (10 participants) and the Pacific Islands (six participants), with the next highest occurrence being Europe (four participants) and India (three participants). Two participants in this study volunteered in a developed country, and these circumstances were due to visiting family nearby or following up on a desire to learn a new skill. These findings are contrary to the Wearing's (2001) literature that Central America, South America, and Africa are the most popular volunteer tourism locations. The difference between Wearing's (2001) findings and this research could be attributed to the fact that most of this study's participants used a local New Zealand volunteer tourism organisation, and most of these local organisations had ties to projects in the Pacific Islands or Asia. Thus, it makes sense that the participants of this research would participate in volunteer tourism trips that are relatively nearby to New Zealand.

This research found that some of the participants volunteered in locations of extreme need, such as Africa, Indonesia, and India, which is consistent with Novelli's (2005) statement that volunteer tourism is found in areas of poverty and severe social, political and/or environmental issues. In fact, two of the study's participants volunteered in the aftermath of natural disasters, and they remarked that they knew there was a need after the devastation.

4.3.2 Activity Types

The participants were asked what type of volunteer work their volunteer tourism trips were comprised of. Participants responded with the main activity or activities of their volunteer work, such as 'building a reading room,' 'teaching English,' or 'rubbish clean-up.' Using some of Wearing's simpler categories of volunteer tourism activities, the participants' activities easily fit into six activity type categories. Bearing in mind that some participants went on more than one volunteer tourism trip in the past 10 years, and some reported doing several different types of activities within just one trip, Table 2 illustrates the six activity categories, as well as the number of participants whose volunteer work activity or activities fit into that category.

Table 2: Activity Types and Number of Participants
Claiming this Activity

Activity Type	Participants
Construction	10
Teaching	10
Christian outreach	3
Medical assistance	3
Community welfare	2
Conservation	2

'Construction' is one of the largest activity types. This category includes only responses where a participant's volunteer work was to build, repair, or renovate a single building for a single organisation in the local community. Activities in this category include constructing a reading room for a local elementary school, building a room onto a local church, repairing an orphanage building, and painting a school for the deaf. The 'teaching' category includes

activities where a participant taught a subject to a small group of the local community. Activities in this category include teaching English, math, and performing arts at local schools and colleges. Activity types that dealt with pastoral care and encouragement, teaching the Bible to members of the host community, or missionary work were classified under the activity type 'Christian outreach.' Only three interviewees' volunteer activities were for Christian outreach. Medical assistance in this research includes activities where a participant worked in a medical capacity, such as neonatal nursing and doctors-in-training. Similar to Novelli's (2005) definition of 'community welfare,' this category includes participants who said their volunteer work dealt with helping a whole community rather than just one organisation in the community. Both of these participants were involved in disaster relief efforts for the whole host community. Lastly, the 'conservation' category includes activities that were to help the local community's environment or resources, such as rubbish clean-up on a local mountain or beach.

Most of the sample participated in activities of a teaching or a construction capacity. It is interesting that only two participants were involved in activities relating to community welfare, or work with problems facing the whole local community, which differs from Novelli's (2005) findings that the most frequently cited volunteer tourism activity is community welfare. However, this research found similarly to Novelli's (2005) that teaching is a common volunteer activity. The differences in this research and the literature could be attributed to the way participant activities were classified. For example, the definition of 'community welfare' type activities in this research may not have been as broad as Novelli's classification.

4.3.3 Length of the Trip and Length of the Volunteering Component

The trips discussed by participants in this research ranged in length from two weeks to 14 months, with most of the trips running 31 days or less in length. Similar to Novelli's (2005) findings, 23 of the 25 volunteer tourism trips discussed in this study lasted less than five months. The two trips that lasted a year or longer included additional travel or visiting family.

The total length of volunteering within the 25 volunteer tourism trips ranged from five days to five months, with the majority of participants' trips, 20 of the 25 trips, including volunteering that lasted for a month or less. Only three participants' trips included volunteering that lasted for more than a month, but less than two months, and two of the trips' volunteering components lasted from three to five months. None of the volunteering components on these trips lasted for a year or longer.

All of the participants spent some time on their trip in tourist activities, such as sightseeing and relaxing. Only two interviewees remarked that the volunteering took the majority of their trips, but both still had the opportunity to participate in some tourism activities. Many of the participants undertook tourist activities before their volunteer work began, and a few did so after their volunteer work was complete. Several participants spoke of tourist activities prior to and also after their volunteer work. For most interviewees, the tourist activities included visits to the local markets, shopping, or visiting a nearby village or major city. When they were not volunteering, a few of the participants visited local museums to learn more about the culture. Some spoke of doing typical 'touristy' things, such as visiting well-known temples and churches or guided tours of a nearby area.

4.3.4 Types of Volunteer Organisations Used

Most of the participants in this study used an organisation to conduct their volunteer tourism trip. These organisations were of all different types, such as conservation, medical, Christian outreach, and teaching; but, the majority of participants went through a local church to do their volunteer tourism trip (four participants) or used a Christian-driven organisation (eleven participants). For those that went through local churches, the churches seemed to have connections to subsidiary churches abroad in which they organised volunteer trips to help those subsidiary churches. These high numbers could be skewed since the majority of participants were attained through a local church. Interestingly, despite the fact that more than half of the participants used a Christian-type organisation or a local church to organise their volunteer trip, only three participants claimed 'Christian outreach' as their volunteer work activities. Of the three participants whose volunteer work was classified as 'medical assistance,' two used a medical related volunteer organisation, while the other participant used a general volunteer organisation to pursue volunteering activities related to medical skills. Two participants did not use an organisation at all to do their volunteering abroad; their trips were lead by the motivation to travel first and then the desire to volunteer at the locations they travelled to.

4.4   Why These Volunteer Tourists Participated in Volunteer Tourism

The second objective was to explore why volunteer tourists participate in volunteer tourism. Few studies exist on volunteer tourists' motives (Broad, 2003; Brown & Lehto, 2005; Brown & Morrison, 2003); however, an in-depth study of motives is beyond the scope of this research. In order to fulfil the second objective, this research aimed to only find themes of the participant's main motives for taking their trips.

4.4.1 Summary of Main Motives

Participants were asked their main motive for participating in each of their volunteer tourism trips. It must be noted that some of the respondents gave more than one motive for going on their trip or gave a motive for each volunteer tourism trip they included in their interview from the past 10 years. Consequently, the summary of main motives contains a total of 39 motives for the 22 participants. The participants' answers were compiled, analysed, summarised, re-coded, and fit easily into one of four simplified main themes. Table 3 shows the four main motive themes and the number of participants with each motive.

Table 3: Main Motives Themes and Number of Participants with each Motive

Main Motive Themes	Number of Participants
Desired a New Experience	19
To Help Others	11
To Use Their Skills	5
Self-Discovery	4

The 'desired a new experience' theme includes participants who wanted to go on the trip to see another part of the world or another culture they had not seen before. The category also includes participants who decided to volunteer to meet local people in the travel destination or to learn more about their career skills in another country or culture. Participants who said they went on the trip to assist others, which includes helping others through constructing a building or teaching English, were categorised as 'to help others.' Participants whose main motivation was a form of Christian outreach, such as sharing the Bible or helping others get to know Jesus, were included in this category because those participants see Christian outreach as a form of 'helping others.' 'To use their skills' includes participants who went on the volunteer trip to use their skills in a destination other than their own country or specifically

for a volunteer project. Lastly, 'self-discovery' includes participants who declared motives relating to 'getting to know their selves' more and finding a new career path.

According to this data, the majority of the study's participants went on their volunteer tourism trip with a desire to experience something new. The second largest motive was the desire to help others, which is termed 'altruism' in other research (Broad, 2003; Brown & Lehto, 2005; Wearing, 2001; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). This study's results differ from Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) findings that volunteer tourists are primarily motivated through altruism because this study found the desire for a new experience to outweigh 'altruism' or 'to help others.' The results of this study resemble Broad's (2003) findings where the majority of participants claimed motives relating to the desire for a new experience for themselves. An altruistic motive exists in both studies, but was not the main motive for the majority of the volunteer tourists. This study's results are similar to Wearing's (2001) study of the younger Youth Challenge International volunteer tourists where travel/adventure ranked as one of the highest motivations; however, this could be attributed to the fact that the majority of participants in this study were less than 26 years of age at the time of their trip. Younger volunteer tourists may be in a phase of their life that has less responsibility and commitments compared to other age groups. More importantly, the study results confirm Mustonen's (2007) findings that volunteer tourism can be practised in many ways, and that volunteer tourists' motives can vary. Therefore, this study confirmed that volunteer tourism is not always about altruism, substantiating Brown and Morrison's (2003) argument to separate volunteer tourists into 'vacation-minded' and 'volunteer-minded' categories.

When one thinks of volunteering, one thinks of altruism. Indeed, it is interesting that the main motive of this study is a 'desire for a new experience' instead of 'to help others.' However, the interview questions were aimed at finding out the experiences of the volunteer tourists and

may have swayed participants' answers. For example, the order of the interview questions may have made some participants respond based on their answers to previous interview questions. The findings could also be attributed to the younger age majority of the sample. Lastly, it is important to note that volunteer tourists' needs, images and attitudes of a destination, as well as their social, cultural, and physical environmental influences, all impact their motives to choose a particular project in a particular country (Stebbins & Graham, 2004). Thus, a deeper study of volunteer tourists' motives is more complex than the scope of this dissertation. The motive themes revealed in this study fulfil the study's exploratory objective.

4.4.2   Differences Between Participants

This study investigated possible differences in the motives, such as differences in participants' gender, age, general volunteering background, and chosen trip location. Because a saturation point was not reached with the data, only one possible trend was found. The data shows a possible trend that women were slightly more likely to be motivated 'to help others,' with 43 per cent of the females selecting this as a motive compared to 38 per cent of the males. In the end, this study found no significant differences in regards to participants' demographics or general volunteering experience and their motives.

4.5   What These Volunteer Tourists Attained From Their Experiences

The third objective was to explore what volunteer tourists attain from their volunteer tourism experiences. The 22 interviewees revealed three main themes: experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere interaction with the host community. These themes are discussed in the following sections with supporting quotations from the interviews.

4.5.1   Experiences Relating to Self

'Experiences relating to self,' the largest theme revealed from the data, revolves around the inner feelings participants attained from their experiences. Some participants learnt more about their selves because their experiences tested their potential, while others had life-changing experiences that made them discover their place in the world. Many of the participants perceived their experiences as providing them a sense of satisfaction because it gave them an opportunity to fulfil personal desires and needs. Figure 3 illustrates the interrelating dimensions of this theme: 'learnt about self,' 'life-changing experiences,' and a 'sense of satisfaction.' Accordingly, these dimensions are addressed in order below.

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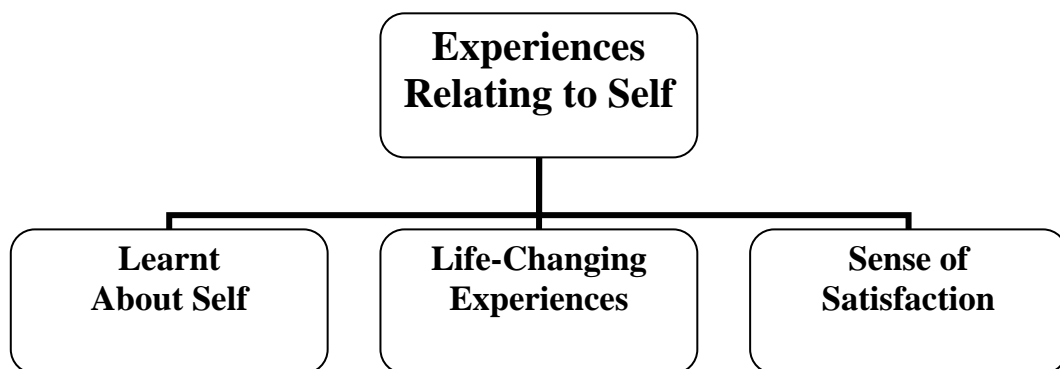
Figure 3: Dimensions of the Theme 'Experiences Relating to Self'

The majority of participants, 15 of the 22 interviewees, expressed that their volunteer tourism experiences helped them learn more about themselves. Several interviewees remarked how their trip actually gave them more personal confidence or made them more aware of their identity, and others learnt about their own potential and personal abilities. Some respondents expressed how their experiences truly made them gain a better understanding of their own lives compared to other holidays they had been on. Many of the interviewees found their experience 'character building' because it allowed them to see their inner selves and develop their own potential. A participant remarked that "…you push yourself and discover your boundaries and push those a little and your limits, and you surpass what you thought was a

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limit and discover so much about yourself" [Natasha, late 30s, Asia and India]. One interviewee learnt so much about herself from her volunteer tourism trip that it personally changed her. She said, "…I don't think I'd be who I am today without having gone on that trip" [Jan, late teens, Pakistan]. Judy said she also learnt more about herself and became more aware of her own identity, her place in the world, and her purpose in life:

> When I was on the trips I had a really strong sense that I was exactly where I was supposed to be….You feel so worthwhile and you have all those good feelings that you're doing what you're supposed to do…I want to do something really good with my life, and I didn't know what that was for a long time. [Judy, late teens, Tonga and Fiji]

Many participants had to change their way of thinking and change their lifestyle in order to adjust to the local community's way of life. Sometimes these adjustments made them learn that they could adapt to life when tough situations came along. In fact, this study found that 10 of the 22 interviewees commented on how they adapted to challenging situations during their trips. Interviewees told stories of learning to deal with the largest cockroaches they had ever seen in their living quarters or having to sleep on hard concrete floors of a local house. One interviewee expressed his new found potential to adapt to challenging situations, as the following quotation reveals:

> …the sense of satisfaction that you got when you realised that you managed to do something….it was really small things like you managed to get the bus from one place, but by the bus we really mean like wee van thing stuffed full of like 15-16 people… [Steve, early 20s, Nepal]

For the majority of participants, their 'experiences relating to self' involved life-changing experiences. The experiences from the trips were new for some of the participants, and the experiences made them open their eyes to the other lifestyles and cultures of the world. For

some participants, these experiences made them change their way of thinking about the world or about their own life. For others, their experience made them actually change their life in some way.

In fact, every participant in this study expressed having experiences that made them think differently about the world or think differently about their own lives. The volunteer tourism trips introduced participants to new experiences that put them out of their comfort zone because these new experiences were completely different from anything they had known. Through these new experiences, interviewees expressed how their trips gave them a different outlook of the world, as expressed in the following quotations: "I guess my eyes were a bit more opened…just in terms of the world and people and what happens in it" [Jan, late teens, Pakistan]; and "It broadened my horizon because it was my first exposure to students or people who just for five or ten years previously had been living under communism" [Oscar, early 20s, Poland]. For many participants, their first-hand experiences of other lifestyles in the world made them think about their own lives differently. They were able to compare their own identity to the local culture. One respondent said:

> I loved the simplicity of their life and how they don't have any of the dishwashers, washing machines, anything that we have, and they still seem to have enough time to have fun, good friends, and it was just a really nice – sort of refreshing – made you look at your life in a different way. [Tina, mid-40s, Kenya]

Oscar thought of his own 'poor student' life differently after his trip. "Up until that point I was comparing – 'I'm a student. I don't have as much money as most people around me' – true. I am a student in the UK. I have a lot more money than most people in the world. Didn't often think that" [Oscar, early 20s, Poland]. Busy entrepreneur Alex realised from his experiences in the host culture's lifestyle that his life did not have to be so fast-paced:

It's helped me to realise that I need to slow down and chill out a bit…Life is like these folk live – if something takes a wee while – so what. Enjoy life like they do….You *can* make it work if you just take time out for yourself and just do some of the simple things in life. [Alex, mid-40s, Vanuatu]

Some participants discussed how their experiences made them think about all the things they take for granted in their daily lives. Jan [late teens, Pakistan] said, "It was a big shock coming home I think because I had seen all those bits of poverty, and I just thought 'why are we all being so fickle about silly things when there's people out there with no food and with one leg and not even a shoe for the one foot?'" Anne also thought about her own life more upon seeing the world from a different perspective, as expressed in her story: "We got a water system put in for eight families. Well, every time I run the tap I'm thinking 'I've got fresh, pure water here, and they have to carry theirs in a bucket for metres really.' It's given me a new appreciation of how the majority of the world is living" [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia]. Kim's experience of distributing aid funds to victims of a natural disaster made her look at her own life differently:

There's a lot of things that we are very obsessed with as females, like hair removal from the right places, and those kind of things that are cultural norms here; but, really – in the grand scheme of things – they don't matter, and they are certainly not worth spending what a family could live on in a year on in one month. What we were giving people to restart their livelihoods from scratch…was $400 American Dollars. That was it to restart their whole lives" [Kim, early 20s, Indonesia].

Not only did the experiences make the interviewees think about the world or their own lives differently, but also most participants actually remarked how their trip made them feel 'lucky' in relation to others in the world. Interviewees made comments such as, "It certainly made me realise how lucky we are and how much I have in my life, and how fortunate I've been in

the education I have had and the opportunities I've had" [Heidi, early 60s, Cambodia]. Oscar had commented about his feelings from his trip from when he recognised the inequality that exists in the world. He realised that he was able to afford riding in the first-class section of the Polish train, while most Poles were crowded in second-class because they could not afford the additional two pounds to upgrade to a first-class ticket. For a few of the respondents, the polluted or harsh environment of the host country made them feel fortunate they were born and still live in a country like New Zealand.

For many of the respondents, their experiences did more than just make them *think* about things differently, it made them *change* their lives in some way. For 15 of the 22 interviewees, the experiences made them change a small aspect of their life upon returning from the trip: "…it helped me as a Christian because I learned to rely on God more" [Lily, early 20s, France]; and "I *was terribly* materialistic before, but I certainly have [the locals] in my mind now to temper my own lifestyle" [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia]. Tom changed personally after he experienced how hard the people in the Philippines work to get their children to university compared to New Zealanders who seemed to take for granted being able to go to university. He commented, "…it did actually motivate me a little bit more to study harder the next time I went" [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]. Jake [late 40s, India] said when he came back he did not purchase the brand new car he planned to purchase before he went on his trip. He said, "It's probably changed me in that I don't think we need to spend as much money on cars and houses and stuff like that that we do." Jerry's trip to Romania also changed the way he operates his daily life: "We'd come out of Romania and met with people who didn't have very much to live on, and we learnt that when the clothes dryer packed up, we didn't replace it. We hung clothes in the garage…which we still do. We still don't have a clothes dryer" [Jerry, late 50s, Romania]. Other volunteers expressed their personal change from their trips in the following ways:

…when I came home actually, I kind of had this little thing that…if it was a cold day and if I had a jacket with me, I wouldn't put it on for a while even though I was cold…just to remind myself that there were people in the world who didn't have anything. Just to remind myself that I had the option of putting on a jacket and actually go home and have a warm shower if I get cold. And I still do that to this day [Jan, late teens, Pakistan].

I am happy to give money towards [the organisation] rather than go out and buy something fancy and new for myself. I always did that a little bit, but that has changed because I can see how practical that contribution is, and I can see that $1-$1.50 actually *can* make a difference. [Heidi, early 60s, Cambodia]

Some interviewees even stated that they had started to volunteer locally more after their trips, and one participant even started an organisation locally to help the host community from her trip.

For other respondents, the personal change was more dramatic because their experience changed their purpose in life. Eight of the 22 interviewees said that they changed or desired to change their career or purpose in life due to their volunteer tourism experience. Natasha [late 30s, Cambodia, India, and Thailand] said, "I'm definitely thinking I want to do more in sort of international aid and development work type stuff." The volunteer tourism experience for Oscar [early 20s, Poland] was foundational for his career because his experience made him realise that he wanted to work more on a personal level with people. Other interviewees made the following remarks:

After I came back from the trip I realised that I kind of wanted to change – I guess my future, but I also wanted to work in an environment that was helpful to people in a similar situation to the Philippines. So, that's when I started looking for…missionary

development/public work – volunteer work in developing countries…So, it was definitely *due* to the trip to the Philippines. [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]

…you see it in books and on TV. But, I guess just the reality of it and seeing it with my own two eyes and that kind of saying no to the 50th beggar that you had seen. That's really a bloody challenge. To this day, that's what I want to do is to try and stop that. So, it definitely was a turning point for wanting to be in international development. [Jan, late teens, Pakistan]

A sense of satisfaction was a feeling that most participants, 20 of the 22 interviewees, attained from their trips, which can be attributed to other dimensions of their experience: enjoyment of their volunteer work; helping others; gained friendships; and self-discoveries. Some of these experiences could be considered a 'give and take' scenario where the participants were able to partake in activities they really enjoyed with the locals, such as playing soccer, watching the locals dance, or sharing the Bible, while they also received a sense of satisfaction from their enjoyment and entertainment.

Several interviewees gained a sense of satisfaction because they knew they were helping others with their needs. An interviewee explained this by saying, "…it's satisfaction out of knowing that I'm using the skills I've picked up over the years to make the life better for other people" [Jake, late 40s, India]. Many respondents commented about how the local community held a farewell ceremony to thank the volunteers for all their hard work. The interviewees expressed how these ceremonies were very beneficial to them and really gave them a sense of satisfaction for all of their volunteering efforts to help the host community.

Other participants expressed a sense of satisfaction from their gained friendships along the way. These friendships made many of them feel included in the host community's life and feel that they belonged with them. Jerry [late 50s, Romania and Fiji] discussed how his sense

of satisfaction came from the relationships he gains with the local people: "…[meeting the locals] leads to a deeper level of satisfaction when you enter a relationship with people that you can leave behind something of yourself with them and them with you."

A few respondents experienced a sense of satisfaction through their self discoveries. Tina [mid-40s, Kenya] said, "It was good for me in that I had to go out and to make the effort to meet people and things, which I found really good. And it was really rewarding because I've made quite a few new friends which is really neat." Another interviewee said his experience gave him a sense of satisfaction because he learnt more about his own life: "I got a lot out of it myself about understanding about people and…after you understand other people's lives, you tend to be a little bit more inward looking and understand your life a little bit better as well. So, it was good" [Tom, early 20s, Philippines].

Despite the fact that almost all of the participants expressed some form of satisfaction from their experience, a few of the participants said they expected that their volunteering experience would have helped the local community more than it actually did, tempering their satisfaction. These instances occurred with all three of the participants who volunteered in a short-term medical volunteer tourism trip. They did not feel they made as big of a difference to the local community compared to the majority of the study's other participants who participated in other capacities, such as in construction, conservation, or Christian outreach. The medical participants made the following statements:

> Maybe it was partly our expectation before we went there that we thought we'd be really useful. We had all this knowledge. We knew all this stuff, but…knowledge isn't actually going to help when you don't have any resources… [Tracy, early 20s, Nepal]

You would make changes and they would just change them back to what they were. They have their way of working and that's worked for them for a long time, and so unless you were there for along time and they could see the benefits of you making changes…I guess that was the one disappointing thing, in a sense, in that you couldn't make as such a big difference as you might have thought you could have. [Tina, mid-40s, Kenya]

Although these participants did not feel as though they helped the local community as much as they desired, they all expressed a desire to participate in another volunteer tourism trip in a medical capacity in the future. They all realised on their trip that there were things that they could have done to help the local community if they had known before they left on their trip, and they spoke of what they would do differently the next time around. Thus, their experience as a volunteer tourist was not totally negative as they would not have a desire to return if that were true. It seems from these interviews that often medical volunteer tourists are not always properly prepared for their experiences compared to other types of volunteer tourists in this study, and that often there is a lack of resources at the destination for them to fully make an impact on the host community.

People are increasingly recognising the nature of traditional mass tourism, and are increasingly desiring altruism, self-change, and identity confirmation in this uncertain, post-modern life (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). Not only does volunteer tourism provide participants with opportunities to learn more about their own identity, have life-changing experiences, and gain a sense of satisfaction, but also provides a peek into the backstage of a culture, which is discussed next.

4.5.2 Getting Behind-the-Scenes

The second main theme revealed from the data is that the participants perceived their experience as 'getting behind-the-scenes.' They felt that their experiences contained aspects that could not be attained in other tourism settings, such as a beach resort or a staged performance of a culture. Their experiences seemed to be something other than a beautifully painted picture of the host community. Figure 4 illustrates that this feeling of being 'behind-the-scenes' was expressed in three linked ways: experiences off the beaten track; experiences of daily life; and experiences of the locals in non-tourist situations.

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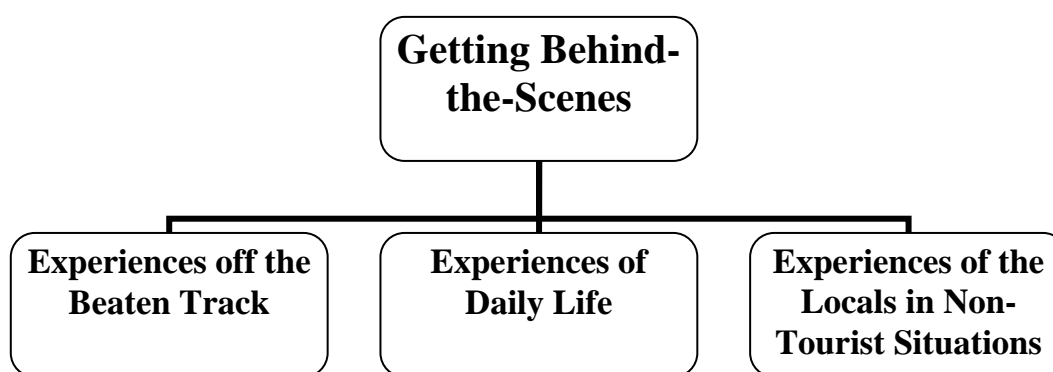
Figure 4: Dimensions of the Theme 'Getting Behind-the-Scenes'

Eighteen of the 22 interviewees described how they 'got off the beaten track' during their volunteer tourism experience. They expressed how their volunteering at the destination allowed them to see and sometimes work in areas that most tourists never see, such as prostitute lane in Calcutta or the slums of the cities. Others expressed that they saw how the locals cooked their foods or made their arts and crafts. Respondents made comments such as, "…we went to places where foreigners aren't…" [Jan, late teens, Pakistan]; and "…we lived in a little village up on the hill where no tourists had ever been" [Lana, mid-60s, Vanuatu]. Other participants made these remarks:

…[a local] took me to a couple of the local restaurants. We walked around the art galleries together, a sort of back area of Yangon, I don't think anyone else would have found. [Susan, mid-50s, Myanmar]

I was volunteering and we weren't just being taken around place to place where the tourist guide wanted to take us or where the packaged tourism places were, and we were actually getting into a suburban area for a couple of weeks instead of being shown 'this is what we want you to see about our country' and things like that. A little bit more gritty and real. [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]

Seventeen of the 22 participants experienced the daily life of the host community. While some tourists may experience a culture that is on display through a museum or a staged performance, these experiences were different. These volunteer tourists felt like they did not see a staged performance in any way because they saw the family during their daily life routines. These interviewees saw the back stage region of the local culture instead of viewing the culture only in the front stage region. Participants made comments such as, "It felt like we were being part of everyday life with people" [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]; "You saw the inside – the back of house rather than the front of house" [Jerry, late 50s, Romania]; and "You just get to *see* the way they live and the way that they interact with each other" [Jake, late 40s, India]. Christi [early 20s, Cook Islands] told a story about meeting a girl from the host community and how she spent most of her time at the girl's house and even went to a local wedding with her. Other interviewees expressed their experiences of the daily life of the host community in the following ways:

We actually went to a child's birthday party, so we went *into* their house and they entertained us….So, I got to see the culture, how they put grass on the floor for a special occasion and dress up in their white clothes…we really got into the culture. [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia]

I met their friends. I went to their Bible studies and their church, and I went shopping with her. I saw how much money they spent on things, and I knew what food they had in the house, and I knew what they were saving for. I saw how they did their washing all those things that are part of the culture. [Tina, mid-40s, Kenya]

One interviewee described how her 'behind-the-scenes' experience of the host community's daily life gave her a more 'authentic' experience:

…doing the volunteering…allowed us to meet Nepali people and live with the family and do the day-to-day life. I think we did get to have a bit more of an authentic experience of Nepal rather than doing the touristy – just seeing the tourist centres, which now I see don't really represent Nepal – the people and things. [Tracy, early 20s, Nepal]

Seeing the daily life of the Other made some participants see the hardships of the locals. Several of the interviewees spoke of seeing poverty and the slums of the city where large families share one room with no furniture or bathroom facilities. These sights are not always visible in other forms of tourism. One interviewee said that the locals experienced subsistence living, and if their crops did not produce, they did not eat. These volunteer tourists experienced these hardships first-hand because they got behind-the-scenes and in the daily life of the host community.

In other forms of tourism, the tourist may only see the front region of a host community and may only get to know the locals in a tourism-type setting, such as a hotel or restaurant, where locals work in subservient roles. Locals who deal with tourists daily possibly only have superficial interaction with them. However, in this study, 21 of the 22 interviewees described their volunteer tourism experience as allowing them to experience and get to know the locals because they were in with the local community in non-tourism settings. Their

volunteer experience put them in contact with the host community in situations other than a local delivering a margarita to a beach cabana. Participants said, "I was working alongside local people in projects that I was passionate about and using their methods" [Kim, early 20s, Indonesia]; and "You're working at *their* level. You're not setting yourself above them. You're working alongside them and they teach you things and you teach them things… [Lana, early 60s, Fiji]. Other interviewees also mentioned how they worked alongside the locals:

> I had this friend, a girl called Tahiti…so I'd follow her around the village and there was another couple of girls I got along with really well. And I'd just sit in their homes while they were preparing their costumes and stuff. I actually helped them make their costumes a little bit. [Christi, early 20s, Cook Islands]

> You get to meet people. You get to laugh a lot with local people as you work with them…I have always found that that's what volunteering does for you. It's the interaction with people as you do stuff together. It's not sort of plastic. [Susan, mid-50s, Myanmar]

It must be noted that being behind-the-scenes and in the daily life of a culture caused a small number of participants to express safety and sanitation concerns. This brings up a whole different question as to whether volunteer tourists truly desire a behind-the-scenes experience that may even be considered 'unsafe' in their terms. For example, some volunteer tourists may still want to be behind-the-scenes, but remain within their own comfort zone:

> I had the challenge of lack of sanitation. It was really hot. I couldn't turn on the tap….There was *no* tap. It's the challenge of preparing meals, pumping water from the lake *up* the hill. Man that was horrible!…It was a hand pump and that was situated in one of the coolest spots of the camp, which is where the flies like to have gone. So,

you were going to get bitten a lot when you pumped the water, and then the water had

to be boiled. [Oscar, early 20s, Poland]

However, some of the interviewees expressed that safety was not a concern for them despite

the turmoil they experienced at the host destination, and they said that their challenging

experiences were valuable. Thus, a person's expectations and previous background may

influence the way they see and deal with challenging situations during their volunteer tourism

trip.

In terms of expectations, a few of the study's participants spoke of how their 'getting behind-

the-scenes' experience was not as they had envisioned the host destination to be. For some

participants, the experience was better than they expected. They originally thought that they

would have to work and live in areas that were less modern than what they found. Tina [mid-

40s, Kenya] said, "I thought it would be more like a village I guess, but it was more like a

town. It's a wee bit more civilised than what I thought." Another participant made the

following remark:

Before I left, I thought I was going to be sleeping on the floors, and we got there and

we had beds and running water….so when you're expecting a lot worse it was quite

nice. It was like a New Zealand bach. [Matt, early 20s, Russia]

For a few participants, the experience was worse than they expected. Oscar [early 20s],

expressed that the conditions in Poland "…were more primitive than [he] thought they were

going to be."

While most interviewees' experiences seemed behind-the-scenes, one participant's experience

was not in line with the true daily life of the locals:

The living arrangements were more comfortable…I was expecting long drop toilets all the way actually…We got flush Western toilets…The school didn't have them. The school had little long drop toilets, but in both places where we were staying there were flush toilets. [Jenny, early 40s, Cambodia]

Thus, some volunteer tourism organisations seem to put the volunteer tourists into accommodations that are similar to what they are accustomed to back at home, which brings up another issue. How much do volunteer tourism organisations control what is presented to the volunteer tourists? Volunteers may be getting a sanitised version of the daily life of the locals, which arguably does not provide volunteer tourists with a true behind-the-scenes experience.

Despite this argument, the study's results do reveal that the majority of participants perceived their volunteer tourism trip as providing behind-the-scenes experiences. Through these behind-the-scenes experiences, participants gained better opportunities for more sincere communication and relationships with the host community, as well as other volunteers, which are discussed in the next section.

4.5.3   Sincere Communication and Relationships

'Sincere communication and relationships' was the third main theme revealed from this study. Because these volunteer tourists were around the host community and the other volunteers for longer periods, they were afforded opportunities to visit and communicate beyond the simple 'What is your name?' and 'Where are you from?' types of questions. For many of the respondents, this sincere communication led to relationships with members of the host community or their fellow volunteer tourists. Figure 5 illustrates the dimensions of the theme 'sincere communication and relationships.'
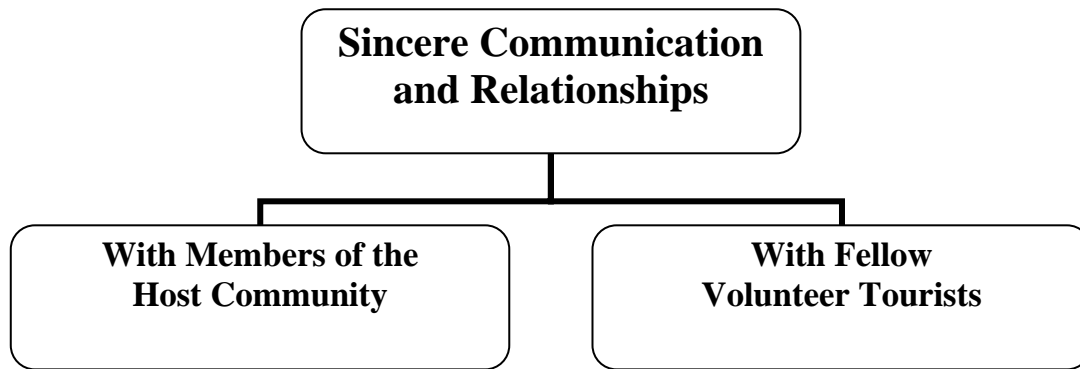
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        │     Host Community     │     │   Volunteer Tourists   │
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Figure 5: Dimensions of the Theme 'Sincere Communication and Relationships'

Meeting the locals in non-tourist situations provided most respondents, 19 of the 22, with opportunities for more sincere communication with members of the host community. The participants expressed this by saying: "I had a lot of time talking with people" [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia]; "When you're there volunteering, you kind of become part of the community more, and people want to come and talk to you, and there's a bit more of a common ground" [Judy, late teens, Tonga]; "I think when you're helping people they're possibly a little more open to talk to you about just general more everyday things, and it's more on an equal level" [Tina, mid-40s, Kenya]; and "I had a lot more in-depth conversations with people in my volunteer work" [Susan, mid-50s, Myanmar]. Other participants discussed specific stories and conversations with the local community, such as conversations about birth control, which they would never have had without being a volunteer tourist, while others remarked how they felt more on an equal level with the host community. Olive [early 60s, Cambodia] said, "I really valued the relationship with them because we were just all people together." Other interviewees made the following comments about their sincere and more intimate contact with the host community:

> …once you get to know someone over a couple of days, you get involved in their life a little bit more and things start to surface about the culture and actually build up the relationships. So, you can ask questions about people like 'Why do you do this, or

what part of the culture is this to do with' – just a little bit more *intimate* relationship with people. [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]

We had an *official* reason for being there and *official* acceptance as representing an organisation of standard. And therefore, people opened up to their own lives, their own situations, showed you things, explained things, understood their life, that you'd never get from meeting people *casually*. [Jerry, late 50s, Romania]

The sincere communication with the host community increased some participants' understanding of the host community's culture. Some participants felt that being on the same level with the host community allowed them to understand the culture better:

…the volunteer work was kind of the best part of the trip because it gave me purpose and it actually made me connect with people, with local people…We actually got an insight into their lives and an insight into the way the culture clicked a little bit, and it was just a lot more personal. [Tom, early 20s, Philippines]

…speaking to the Tibetan refugees, they all had these amazing stories of walking over the Himalayas in the middle of winter and people dying…just basically risking their lives to get out of a country….but actually sitting across the table from a group of people with tears in their eyes talking about this and loosing memories of their families....It just makes it so much more personal and it's like this rush of understanding. You actually understand their history versus reading a book about it or seeing it in a film or something… [Natasha, late 30s, India]

Despite the fact that the vast majority of interviewees attained sincere communication with the host community, the sincere communication did seem to be hindered for a few participants due to language barriers: "We just had tons of challenges on just the basis of language" [Oscar, early 20s, Poland]; "Most people I met had really miniscule English. So, that made it difficult" [Susan, mid-50s, Myanmar]; and "Couldn't really talk to people about it that much

because they didn't speak English, but I didn't speak Russian" [Matt, early 20s, Russia].

Because of situations like these, it is argued that sincere communication with the host community is not always attained in every volunteer tourism situation.

Because of the opportunities for sincere communication in most situations, all of the interviewees spoke of friendships or relationships with members of the host community. Tina [mid-40s, Kenya] remarked how close she became with her local home stay host: "…the highlight for me would have been living with the family I lived with and making friends with the woman I did…She's lovely, that would have been the best part." Likewise, Tom [early 20s, Philippines] said, "…my biggest experience was having friendships with people from other cultures…" In fact, many of the interviewees still keep in touch with members of the host community that they met on their trip: "My students still write to me" [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia]; and "…there's this sort of contact with them every now and again, and we still get their newsletters and things" [Jerry, late 50s, Fiji].

Some would say that travelling itself opens people's eyes to other cultures; however, Tom believed it was his relationship with the local people that truly taught him about the local culture.

> It just expanded my horizons….because of being overseas, but also because of just meeting these people – meeting people in poverty for the first time – having a relationship with people in poverty for the first time [Tom, early 20s, Philippines].

Because of the relationship she established with the local community during her volunteer tourism trip, Lana was able to speak of a heart-felt sincere interaction with the local village:

The day we left, they all lined up. They were all crying and we were crying. And the chief came up to Robert, stood in front of him, took off his shirt, and handed it to him. It was his best shirt. And Robert immediately took off his shirt and handed it to him. [Lana, late 60s, Vanuatu]

The volunteering aspect of their trip also allowed many of the interviewees to get closer and more intimate with fellow volunteers, causing sincere communication and relationships to form. Participants spoke of having to sleep and work near other volunteers for long periods of time. For most of the respondents, there was not a lot of privacy and everything was out in the open. This forced many of the volunteer tourists to share everything with their fellow volunteers, including living quarters, toilet facilities, food or cooking responsibilities, and even their emotions, such as 'being out of their comfort zone' or 'away from all that they know.' Because their fellow volunteers were in the same situation, sometimes they were the only ones to share feelings with or that would understand what was going on with them. An interviewee remarked how the closeness to the other volunteers allowed her to use the volunteers as an 'emotional springboard' while she was volunteering: "Getting to know the volunteers was probably for support really because you are sharing the same experiences; so, it was good to be able to talk about the things you'd found hard or the things you'd seen" [Tina, mid-40s, Kenya].

The closeness and sincere communication with the fellow volunteer tourists led to relationships for some. Jenny [early 40s, Cambodia] spoke of her original reluctance to be close to numerous other volunteers for such a long period of time; however, her experience broadened her mind when she realised they were all there for the same purpose, to help others: "As a group we came together quite quickly and we all found we had a similar sense of humour, and we all wanted to help people. And so, even though we were all quite different, those two things sort of held us together." Tracy [early 20s, Nepal] discussed how

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she was able to share her emotions from her new experiences with her volunteer tourism colleagues:

> The other volunteers that came from all over the world, like Germany and Canada, and we got to know them really well because you're going through this huge experience of 'you've never been to a country like this before' and 'it's the culture shock,' and you're all going through the culture shock *together*, and so, you get to know each other. We still kind of keep in contact on Facebook… [Tracy, early 20s, Nepal]

Although every interviewee spoke about friendships and relationships established from their trips, only a few clearly spoke about relationships that have lasted many years. Most, but not all, discussed more recent volunteer tourism trips that have occurred in the last five years. For these participants, the established relationships are still somewhat fresh on their minds and it may be that these relationships fade over time. Regardless, the volunteer tourists in this study perceived their experiences as worthwhile, as discussed in the following section.

4.6   Was the Volunteer Tourism Trip Worthwhile?

The volunteer tourism trips seemed to provide valuable experiences for most of the participants. When asked if they would volunteer again on another holiday, the vast majority (20 of the 22 interviewees) said they would, as noted in the following quotations:

> Yeah, for sure! Those are I think the most rewarding and I'd say the best possible way to invest your travel money, that's for sure, because you end up with life-long stories and memories. [Christi, early 20s, Cook Islands].

> I definitely would. In fact, I don't want to go on a holiday *just* as a tourist again. [Heidi, early 60s, Cambodia].

Only two of the participants said they would not do another volunteer tourism trip. One remarked that she would prefer to only volunteer full-time in the future and that she never enjoyed regular tourism to begin with because she feels it exploits the host community. The other participant said, "Probably not. Just because…the rest of my life will probably be volunteer type of stuff or working for the church development type of stuff…" [Tom, early 20s, Philippines].

Based on the overwhelming desire to do another volunteer tourism trip again, the experiences of these volunteer tourists seemed to be meaningful. Several of the participants commented about how they wanted to do another volunteer tourism trip in the near future. In fact, three of the interviewees had another volunteer tourism trip already arranged at the time of the interview, while two others expressed the desire to arrange a trip relatively soon.

Chapter Five: Discussion - Authenticity in Volunteer Tourists' Experiences

5.1   Introduction

This chapter addresses the study's aim to explore the role of authenticity in these volunteer tourists' experiences. The chapter is divided into sections corresponding with what this study's participants attained from their experiences: experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere communication and relationships. In each section, the study's findings are summarised, compared to previous volunteer tourism research, and explored in relation to notions of authenticity. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the participants' perceptions of what sets volunteer tourism apart from their other non-volunteer tourism experiences.

5.2   Role of Authenticity in 'Experiences Relating to Self'

This study found that participants attained experiences from their volunteer tourism trips that revolved around their inner selves. First, the results show that a number of these experiences involved the participants' learning more about their self. For some, their experience increased their personal confidence, made them more aware of their identity, or made them learn more about their own potential from challenging situations. What they learnt about their self on their trips made them re-interpret how they saw their identity and sometimes how they saw their place in the world. The findings from this study confirm previous research that also reports volunteer tourists' acquiring greater self-awareness, refiguring their self and identity (Broad, 2003; Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & Neil, 2000), increasing their confidence in their own capabilities (Broad, 2003; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), and recognising their own place in time and space (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Simpson, 2004).

These 'experiences relating to self' found in this study relate to notions of existential authenticity, which, as noted in the literature review, means 'knowing oneself' or 'being in touch with oneself' when conducting a tourist activity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). In relation to tourism research, the concept of existential authenticity deals with tourists' existence at a destination and the self realisation, creation, or restructuring of their identities (authentic selves) while at the destination. Hence, it is argued that the volunteer tourists in this study who learnt more about their self experienced existential authenticity. Within the theory of existential authenticity, the 'self-making' aspect of Wang's (1999) intra-personal authenticity comes into play in the study's results. To reiterate, the 'self-making' aspect says that tourists seek experiences that are not found in their everyday lives in order to find their true identity. One could argue that volunteer tourists could just volunteer locally in order to fulfil their desire to have a new experience or to help others. On the other hand, a major motive for the volunteer tourists in this research was a 'desire for a new experience.' It seems some participants sought experiences that were not found in their local community, which may be why they decided to volunteer abroad. Similar to Wearing's (2000) research, these volunteer tourists sought new experiences in new environments, and they were out of their comfort zone. They had to reassess their own behaviour and values in the new environment of the host destination. Through this active thought process, they were able to learn more about their own lives and could reconstruct their own identity and their values.

Secondly, participants in this study attained life-changing (cathartic) experiences from their volunteer tourism trips. For every participant in this study, these experiences made them think differently about the world or their own lives, which confirms previous volunteer tourism research (Broad, 2003; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Simpson, 2004; Stebbins & Graham, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). From their first-hand experiences of the host

community's lifestyle, some participants were able to see and better understand issues affecting the host community, which made them re-evaluate their own lives and understand how much they take for granted. Previous studies (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Wearing & Neil, 2000) also discuss how volunteer tourists create their identity by experiencing the world and its cultures. This study's finding relates to McGehee and Santos's (2005) research, which suggests that first-hand experiences of social conflict at a host destination can increase a person's awareness, sympathy, and support for those issues. Their research also found that an increased awareness of social conflict and issues can change volunteer tourists and cause them to have a personal revelation. Likewise, many of the participants in this study attained a personal revelation because of their experiences and discoveries. For many of the participants, their volunteer tourism experience actually made them change their lives in some way. Some even changed careers or discovered a new purpose for their life. Changes in behaviour and the discovery of a person's role in the universe is also reported in Zahra and McIntosh's (2007) research.

As previously stated, the concept of existential authenticity is the restructuring of identity from tourism activities or experiences. Accordingly, it is argued that the participants' discovery of their role in the universe or their purpose in life was a restructuring of their identities, which exhibits how their volunteer tourism trips resulted in existential authenticity. Additionally, the volunteer tourists in this study learnt more about their self when they noticed their own lives in relation to other peoples' lives around the world. They gained a sense of other cultures and other lifestyles that helped them better understand their own identity and place in the world, and in some cases, made them actually *change* their identity or their 'being.' Through their volunteer tourism experiences, participants discovered for themselves what it meant to be human and discovered their own definition of life, as well as their own meaning to their own life. The volunteer tourism experiences made some participants

increase their awareness of the world's issues, which has led many of them to be more in touch with themselves or re-negotiate their identity. In respect to the life-changing experiences of these volunteer tourists, volunteer tourism seems to provide experiences of existential authenticity.

Lastly, a sense of satisfaction was attained by many of the volunteer tourists in this study. Participants expressed a sense of satisfaction from enjoyment of their volunteer work, from knowing that they were helping others, from gained relationships with members of the host community, or from discovering more about their own identity. Previous volunteer tourism studies (Broad, 2003; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Stebbins & Graham, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007) also describe how volunteer tourists view their experiences as rewarding and providing a sense of satisfaction, benefits, and personal fulfilment.

It is suggested that the satisfaction felt by the participants in this study is a form of existential authenticity. As stated in the literature review, Steiner and Reisinger (2006), believe existential authenticity in tourism experiences derives from human attributes to find one's own satisfaction. When this satisfaction is attained, the tourist can understand what it means to be happy according to one's own definition of happiness. The sense of satisfaction found in this study relates to these ideas of existential authenticity because the participants gained internal feelings of satisfaction and what it means to be happy.

According to Wang (1999), the intra-personal 'bodily feeling' aspect of the concept of existential authenticity includes feelings a tourist gains from fulfilling their personal needs. At the beach, a tourist knows they should relax and have fun while enjoying the sun. By going to the beach instead of another destination, a tourist seeks bodily feelings of relaxation and recreation in order to satisfy personal needs and a personal sense of self. Likewise, this

study's volunteer tourists chose to participate in a volunteer tourism trip instead of another type of trip because they wanted 'a new experience,' 'to help others,' 'to use their skills,' or 'to discover their self' (see Table 3). Some of the participants gained a feeling of satisfaction because their volunteer tourism experiences satisfied their personal needs and desires. These bodily feeling of satisfaction provided them with existential authenticity because they were able to gain a better sense of self and a better understanding of what it means to be happy according to their own definition of happiness.

It is argued that notions of constructive authenticity add insight to this study's findings. As mentioned in the literature review, constructive authenticity is a symbolic authenticity where tourism experiences and objects appear authentic to tourists because they are authentic in terms of tourists' socially constructed perspectives, points-of-view, and beliefs (Wang, 1999). The medical participants from this study all claimed that they did not attain satisfaction because they did not help the local community as much as they had hoped. Before they left on their trip, they had ideas of how their trip would be, and their ideas were based on what they knew about the medical field at the host destination. These participants' Western medical education influenced their expectations of what they could do for the host destination. They realised when they arrived at the host destination that their original expectations were unattainable. These volunteer tourists had to change their perceptions of an 'authentic' medical volunteering experience because, in reality, the lifestyles of the host destination did not allow quick medical changes.

5.3   Role of Authenticity in 'Getting Behind-the-Scenes'

The results of this study show that the participants attained 'behind-the-scenes' experiences of the host community in three main ways. Some participants got the feeling that they were not

on a packaged tour of the host destination because they were doing activities and seeing things that were off the beaten track for most tourists. These findings are similar to Broad's (2003) research in that volunteer tourists get off the beaten track and see things that many other tourists never see. Others participants of this study attained an insight into the routine, daily life of the host community instead of experiencing a staged performance. These results confirm McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) and Broad's (2003) findings that volunteer tourists experience the real daily life of the host community and see what life is really like for them. Lastly, the majority of this study's participants attained contact with locals in non-tourist settings, which is similar to McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) and Brown and Lehto's (2005) research where volunteer tourists visited the host community in their private homes and experienced the real local people. These experiences attained by the participants in this study can all be seen as 'getting behind-the-scenes' of the host community's lives. However, the study did reveal safety and sanitation concerns for few participants, meaning that being behind-the-scenes at the host destination was not always a true desire if it meant an unclean or unsafe living or working environment, which is similar to Bruner's (1994) research.

In MacCannell's theory of staged authenticity, his concept of the 'tourists' desire to get back stage' is seen in the experiences attained by this study's volunteer tourists. As a reminder from the literature review, MacCannell's (1999) staged authenticity discusses how tourism settings can be seen as having a 'front stage' region, which is the meeting place for hosts and guests, and a 'back stage' region, which is where the hosts keep the secrets and routines of their daily lives from the guests. According to MacCannell (1999), tourists want to 'get off the beaten track' and 'in with the natives,' and they desire to see something other than a staged performance. In this regard, most of the participants in this study got off the beaten track. They went to villages that no foreigners had ever been to, went to markets that only the locals knew about, and some were in areas that a tour bus would never go.

The volunteer tourists in this study saw behind-the-scenes, or the back stage of the host community, because they saw the daily life of the local community instead of a staged performance. MacCannell (1999) argues that a tourist can see the daily life of a host community when they are in the back stage region. Similarly, participants in this study expressed that they had the opportunity to be one of the locals and to experience the everyday culture and customs of the locals (weddings and birthdays), as well as their hardships, which are not usually visible in other tourism settings. Using MacCannell's terms, this study's volunteer tourists experienced more to the host culture than meets the eye because these volunteer tourists had the opportunity to see the true workings of the host community, as is only seen in the back stage region. Additionally, some of these participants directly experienced the host community's social conflict and issues, such as poverty and hunger. The realness of the back stage encounter makes participants realise that true life for the Other is not a perfect rehearsed show. This realisation can make a participant gain an understanding of their own lives and identity, which relates back to theories of existential authenticity as illustrated in the previous theme.

Experiences of the locals in tourism type settings, such as visiting with the hotel concierge or a resort bartender, can be considered experiencing the locals in a staged setting. These locals are in subservient roles and must perform up to the tourist's expectations and smile even when they have no desire to smile. It is suggested that locals in tourist settings are in the front stage of MacCannell's model, and their job is to keep the tourist happy and satisfied. A resort tourist usually does not want to hear about the problems of the locals, for example. The experiences of this study's volunteer tourists seem different from that scenario because they experienced the locals in non-tourist settings, such as in the locals' homes, and the participants actually worked alongside the locals. This meant that the participants saw the

locals in their back stage region where the locals did not have to put on a fake smile. The locals were not putting on a show for the volunteer tourists' eyes or trying to sell the volunteer tourists anything. As MacCannell says, a tourist can pass from the front stage to the back stage, as participants in this research have done, which allows them to get closer to the locals. From this study's results, it is argued that volunteer tourism is the latest attempt for tourists to get back stage. Mustonen (2006) says that tourists are motivated by their desire for authentic experiences and want to encounter the Other. If this is true, then the experiences of the locals attained by the volunteer tourists in this study seem to fulfil this desire.

This study also found that some participants' experiences of the host destination were different from what they originally expected. Some interviewees said that they expected a more primitive destination, while others expected a less primitive destination than what they actually experienced. No volunteer tourism literature discusses volunteer tourists' experiences being different from their expectations, which seems to set this research apart and fill a gap in the volunteer tourism literature. However, Bruner's (1994) research at the New Salem Historic Site found similar ideas that relate to tourists' differing expectations. To reiterate, his research found that some tourists had to re-construct their idea of authenticity when their expectations of the host destination differed from what they experienced and that authenticity can evolve and change depending on one's experiences. Wang's (1999) description of constructive authenticity seems to apply to this scenario. To reiterate, Wang describes constructive authenticity as the authenticity given to objects by tourists in relation to their imagery, expectations, preferences, and beliefs (1999). Wang's (1999) definition of constructive authenticity is evident in this study's findings because the volunteer tourists' visions of an authentic host destination were different from what they actually encountered. The study's participants seemed to base their expectations on what they already knew from their own lives and experiences. So, their images and beliefs of the host destination

influenced if they saw their experience as 'authentic' or not, which is in line with Wang's definition of constructive authenticity. Once they arrived, they had to re-construct their ideas of an 'authentic' host destination, which is in line with Bruner's (1994) argument that tourists' ideas of authenticity are generative.

In summary, these volunteer tourists' experiences involved going behind-the-scenes, or 'back stage' in MacCannell's terms, to get closer to the Other. This closeness to the Other in 'behind-the-scenes' situations provided many of the participants with a more sincere experience, as discussed in the following section.

5.4   Role of Authenticity in 'Sincere Communication and Relationships'

This study's participants attained sincere communication and relationships during their volunteer tourism trips. In fact, the majority of participants said they attained sincere communication with the local community. Participants felt that being around the locals for longer periods of time gave them the opportunity for more in-depth, sincere, and straightforward communication because both the locals and the volunteer tourists were able to ask each other questions and have deeper discussions rather than superficial, quick conversations. Through this sincere communication, several respondents felt as though they were on the same level with the local community instead of feeling as though they were gazing at the local community up on a stage. For some, this sincere communication led to relationships with members of the host community. The relationships with the locals have sometimes endured long past their trips, and some participants still keep in touch with members of the local community. These results are in line with previous research (Brown & Lehto, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007) that also reports non-verbal communication, bonding and relationships between the volunteer tourists and the host community. The sincere

communication and relationships with the host community gave some participants a better understanding of the local culture. Because of their closeness to the host community's lives, participants were immersed in sincere interaction with the local community providing them insight into a living culture. These results confirm prior studies (Broad, 2003; Brown & Morrison, 2003) that report volunteer tourists' having sincere interaction with the host community, which helped them to better understand and appreciate the local culture.

Because of the sincere communication between the volunteer tourists and the host community, it is suggested that notions of sincerity play a role in volunteer tourists' experiences. Sincerity, as stated in the literature review, has to do with a tourist being on the same level with the host community where both the tourists and the host community frankly and openly interact and communicate (Taylor, 2001). Similarly, this study found that sometimes the host communities met the volunteer tourists at the host community's level, which provided a sincere interaction between the host community and the volunteer tourists. Indeed, the volunteer tourists in this study were able to talk openly with the host community about issues affecting both of them, as illustrated in the birth control conversation. This study also highlighted the conversation between a volunteer tourist and Tibetan refugees, which truly did not hide the negative aspects of the locals' lives. This conversation illustrates the true interaction and sincere communication some participants had with their host community. The fact that relationships were formed also demonstrates that sincere involvement and interaction definitely occurred between the host community and the volunteer tourists. Based on the findings of this study and the notion of sincerity, this study's volunteer tourists did not just consume the culture of the host community, but also gave back by providing a situation where the host community can interactively communicate with them and ask them personal questions.

As stated previously, the sincere communication sometimes led relationships to form between the volunteer tourists and the host community. These enduring relationships seem to connect to notions of intimacy in tourism experiences. To reiterate, Trauer and Ryan's (2005) theory of intimacy in tourism studies says that tourists can attain a form of intimacy with the host community due to a deep understanding of each other and an intimate sharing of ideas, information, and personal feelings. Intimacy in tourism experiences is an enduring involvement with the locals that can even affect a tourist's meaning for a place. Based on this, it is suggested that some of the participants in this study experienced intimacy during their volunteer tourism experiences because they gained a deeper understanding of the host community's lives through attained relationships with them. They were able to share feelings and information on the same level for long periods of time, which led to an enduring involvement with them. The story, illustrated in this study, of the village chief who gave his shirt to a participant is a great example of the intimacy involved in some of the participants' experiences. Just the fact that some participants still keep in touch with the host community further illustrates an enduring involvement and intimacy in these experiences. Along the lines of the intimacy theory, some of these volunteer tourists experienced a personal growth when they learnt more about the host community. It must be mentioned that the host community's personal growth and feelings of intimacy were not measured in this study. Thus, the host community's experiences of sincere and intimate involvement with the volunteer tourists may not match those of the volunteer tourists.

This study found also that some participants gained sincere communication and relationships with the other volunteer tourists on their trip, which differs from Brown and Lehto's (2005) research, which found that 'camaraderie' with other volunteers on the same travel group was a motivational factor to go on the trip. The results of this study show that sincere communication and relationships with other volunteers was attained *from* the trip instead of a

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motive for going on the trip (see Table 3). During their volunteer tourism experiences, many

participants in this study spent most of their trip in close contact with the other volunteers in

close living quarters. These volunteer tourists had a commonality on their trip and were

sometimes each other's confidant when challenging situations arose. Due to the closeness to

the other volunteers for long periods of time, some participants had opportunities for sincere

communication. Thus, it is argued that notions of sincerity also play a role in the volunteer

tourists' sincere communication with other volunteers. Because of the sincere

communication, relationships formed among the participants, which suggests that Wang's

(1999) inter-personal 'touristic communitas' aspect of the concept of existential authenticity

plays a role in these findings. As the literature review states, Wang defines touristic

communitas as an inter-personal relationship that occurs among tourists due to a sense of

closeness and shared similarities during a trip. The results of this study are in line with

Wang's (1999) definition because participants spoke of a sense of group intimacy, closeness,

and understanding due to their shared equal social status or rank during their volunteer

experience. Some participants had remarked that they still keep in touch with fellow

volunteers. Hence, Trauer and Ryan's (2005) theory of intimacy also seems to play into these

findings because some participants gained closeness to the other volunteers that endured past

the trip itself.

It is important to state that the volunteer tourism organisation seems to be a simple link to a

more sincere interaction with the host community. Without a link, tourists usually cannot get

deeper into a culture or enter the back stage region of the host community, such as their

private homes. One interviewee had even remarked how the local community usually does

not let tourists into their lives, but his volunteer tourism trip provided a reason for him to be

behind-the-scenes. A person would usually need a reason, such as helping a family renovate

their home, to be allowed into one's life. While a person could still go behind-the-scenes on

non-volunteering trips by meeting locals, for most of this study's participants the volunteer tourism organisation was their easy connection.

5.5   *What Sets Volunteer Tourism Apart?*

Based on the previous discussion, it is in the notions of authenticity and sincerity that volunteer tourism sets itself apart from other forms of tourism. Volunteer tourism is different from other forms of tourism, according to these volunteer tourists, because they perceive it as a more 'authentic' experience of a destination. Bearing in mind that the majority of the participants had travelled abroad prior to their volunteer tourism trips, 20 of the 22 interviewees expressed that their volunteer tourism experiences were different from their non-volunteer tourism experiences. They mainly felt that their volunteer tourism experiences gave them a better sense of self and gave them better insight into the local culture. Jerry discussed how his volunteering experiences changed his perspectives of the world and his own life in ways his other holidays did not:

> You can go and be a visitor in a country…and experience the Alps and the German castles and what everyone does when in Germany or France…But, having been there and been part of people's lives, you're different. You are changed from those experiences. Whereas you can be a tourist and you come back and you're the same person. Being a tourist doesn't change you. Being a volunteer with any kind of aid…that changes you and your perspective on the world. Whereas tourists, you get a different perspective of the world, but once you get that, within a month it's just all in the past…You can visit a place and see poor people, but it doesn't get you in here [pointing to his heart]. [Jerry, late 50s, Romania and Fiji]

After going on their volunteer tourism trips, some respondents changed their way of thinking about tourism because their trips gave them a sense of selflessness compared to their non-volunteer tourism trips. One participant said, "A regular holiday would be all about me and

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this volunteer tourism holiday was about the rest of the world" [Anne, mid-60s, Ethiopia].
Others made the following remarks:

I could spend $20,000 on a trip around Europe or something, but for that money you
can make a lot of lives a lot better…so I'd rather put my money into something like that
than just to put it into a trip for myself. [Jake, late 40s, India]

With regular holidays….it feels like you're taking *away* from things. Volunteering is a
little bit different because it felt like we're actually going and giving... [Tom, early 20s,
Philippines]

For several participants, their volunteering experiences made them realise how much of an
impact they could make in the world if they used their time and resources to volunteer while
on holiday.

Some participants felt that their volunteer tourism experience gave them exposure to the
locals in a way that their other tourism experiences did not. As the study revealed,
participants experienced the local community in areas that most tourists never go. They were
behind-the-scenes experiencing the daily life of the host community and experiencing the
locals more sincerely in settings that were not created for tourists' eyes:

The people that we did meet when you were doing the touristy things were often the
people that were trying to sell you something, or it's not quite as genuine as when we
were doing the volunteer work and we were living with the family. [Tracy, early 20s,
Nepal]

…on a regular holiday you would very rarely get into people's homes in foreign
countries…it would be rare and it'd probably only be for a meal. Whereas we were
there in their homes spending time with them, getting to understand a bit more about
the conditions under which they live…And you *don't* get that as a pure tourist. You

don't often meet the *real* people as a tourist. You meet the people at the restaurant or the camp managers or the *other* tourists who are there. [Jerry, late 50s, Romania and Fiji]

This dissertation has illustrated through the literature review that authenticity in the tourism industry is not a simple, straightforward idea. Determining if volunteer tourism is a more 'authentic' form of tourism than other forms of tourism is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, based on the results of this study and previous research, authenticity does play a role in volunteer tourists' experiences. If tourists desire to attain more insight into a culture and gain deeper interaction with locals at a destination, then a volunteer tourism trip seems to provide better opportunities to fulfil these desires.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

6.1   Conclusion

This study explored the volunteer tourism phenomenon, as well as explored the role of notions of authenticity in volunteer tourists' experiences. Through the literature review, the concept of volunteer tourism and theories of authenticity were discussed in order to introduce the idea of authenticity's role in volunteer tourism experiences. The literature review illustrated how previous volunteer tourism research findings can relate to theories of authenticity; however, the literature has yet to explicitly combine notions of authenticity with what volunteer tourists attain from their experiences. The main question for this study was what is the role of authenticity in volunteer tourism experiences? First, the study explored the volunteer tourism phenomenon by investigating a variety of volunteer tourism trip experiences based on three main objectives: 1) the types of opportunities in which the study's volunteer tourists participated; 2) why they have participated in volunteer tourism; and 3) what participants attained from their volunteer tourism experiences. Then, the study answered the main research question by exploring notions of authenticity in relation to these volunteer tourists' attained experiences. The study's results fulfilled the research objectives, as well as answered the main research question. Since the main aims of this research were exploratory in nature, the study's results are largely theoretical and yield no implications for the volunteer tourism industry.

In relation to the first objective, this study focused on a variety of volunteer tourism trip types instead of focusing on a particular type of volunteer tourist or specific type of volunteer tourism organisation. While this study did not reach saturation with the data, the study's results did illustrate the variety of opportunities that existed to suit these volunteer tourists and their different needs. First, this study's results shed light on the numerous volunteer tourism

opportunities to travel almost anywhere in the world, including both developed and developing countries. Secondly, the results showed that these volunteer tourists participated in six different capacities: construction; teaching; Christian outreach; medical assistance; community welfare; and conservation. This study confirmed that teaching is a common volunteer tourism activity, and the results showed that construction is another common volunteer tourism activity in these volunteer tourists' experiences. Thirdly, this study found that a typical volunteer tourism trip for most of these participants lasted approximately 31 days, with the volunteering portion usually lasting a month or less. These participants typically participated in tourist activities before their volunteering began, and were able to visit local markets, see well-known temples, or take a guided tour around the area. Lastly, the experiences of these volunteer tourists were usually led by a volunteer tourism organisation of various types. Only two of the 22 participants did not use an organisation in order to volunteer abroad.

With regard to the second objective, this study discovered the respondents' motives for participating in their volunteer tourism trips: desired a new experience; to help others; to use their skills; and self-discovery. The study found that 'desired a new experience' and 'to help others' were the two top motives. Wearing (2001) and Zahra and McIntosh (2007) stress that volunteer tourism is different from other forms of tourism because volunteer tourists have an overlying altruistic motive. Interestingly, this study found that the participants' desire for a new experience outweighed their desire to help others, which confirms that volunteer tourists' motives can vary. If a tourist desires to partake in more pleasure-seeking motives, but also wishes to gain the benefits of a volunteering experience, a vacation-minded volunteer holiday can accommodate both of these motives. Because the study of motives is complex, a deeper exploration of these volunteer tourists' motives is beyond the scope of this dissertation;

however, the discovered themes for the participants' motives fulfil the study's exploratory objective.

Concerning the third objective, an exploratory study into the experiences attained by these volunteer tourists revealed three main themes: experiences relating to self; getting behind-the-scenes; and sincere communication and relationships. First, within the 'experiences relating to self,' some participants were able to learn more about their self and their own potential. Many respondents also had life-changing experiences that made them *think* about the world or their own lives differently. For some, these life-changing experiences made them actually *change* their lives in some way. Most interviewees attained a sense of satisfaction from their volunteering from enjoying their volunteer work, from helping others, from gained friendships, or from discovering more about their own lives. Secondly, the 'getting behind-the-scenes' theme contained three dimensions: experiences off the beaten track; experiences of daily life; and experiences of the locals in non-tourist settings. Being a volunteer at the destination allowed many of these volunteer tourists to be in areas that most other tourists never see, such as remote villages. Within their behind-the-scenes experiences, many participants were able to observe and be involved in the daily lives of the host community rather than viewing the culture in a staged performance. They lived and worked around the host community and experienced how they survived from day-to-day. While other forms of tourism may only provide tourists contact with locals who work in the tourism industry, these volunteer tourists attained contact with the locals in non-tourist settings. Participants met real local people who were not trying to sell them anything and who were not in subservient roles to them. Additionally, the results also showed that a few of the participants originally had beliefs and images of the host destination that were different from what they actually experienced. This study revealed that because most of the respondents used a volunteer tourism organisation to organise their trip, they had a reason for being behind-the-scenes.

This provided an opportunity to come closer to the locals beyond the superficial, quick conversation. This leads into the study's third theme 'sincere communication and relationships.' Despite the problems a few volunteer tourists had with language barriers, the majority of this study's participants said that they were able to spend more time with the locals and were able to attain sincere communication with members of the local community. This sincere communication with the local community provided several respondents with opportunities for more insight into the local culture, as well as relationships between the hosts and guests. Furthermore, this study found that some volunteer tourists attained sincere communication and relationships with their fellow volunteers, which seemed to come from being in close proximity to them for long periods of time and from using each other as emotional springboards.

In respect to the research question, this dissertation did not seek to determine if volunteer tourism is more 'authentic' than other forms of tourism because the notion of authenticity in the tourism industry is complex. What is authentic to one tourist is not authentic to another. Likewise, a tourist's definition of an 'authentic' tourism experience at one point in time can even change within the same tourism experience. Consequently, this study only aimed to explore notions of authenticity in these volunteer tourists' attained experiences. Based on this study, notions of authenticity do play a role in these volunteer tourists' experiences. In fact, notions of existential authenticity (intra-personal and inter-personal), constructive authenticity, staged authenticity, sincerity, and intimacy were all linked to participants' experiences. Existential authenticity was experienced by participants who learnt more about their self and had life-changing experiences that made them gain a better or different sense of self or discover their identity. The sense of satisfaction attained by many of these participants shows signs of intra-personal authenticity. The study also demonstrated the role of staged authenticity with behind-the-scenes experiences important to these volunteer tourists. Ideas

of constructive authenticity relate to when some of the participants experienced the host destination differently from their beliefs and expectations. Lastly, notions of sincerity and intimacy, linked to notions of interpersonal authenticity, were significant in the context of volunteer tourists' genuine communication and relationship forming with members of the local community and fellow volunteers. Based on these results, this study concludes that authenticity plays an important role in volunteer tourists' experiences and that this helps differentiate volunteer tourism from other tourism experiences.

Indeed, this study found that the vast majority of these volunteer tourists perceived their volunteer tourism experiences differently than their non-volunteer tourism experiences. First, they perceived their experiences as providing them insight of the host community that is usually not attained in their non-volunteer tourism experiences. Non-volunteer tourists usually view a culture through a performance or staged cultural dinner. According to these participants, volunteer tourism does not involve merely gazing at the Other who is entertaining the tourist from a stage, but rather a true look into the present life of the culture. Secondly, these volunteer tourists perceived their interaction and involvement with the host community as more sincere compared to their non-volunteer tourism experiences. Many participants interacted with the local community at the same level, which provided opportunities for sincere communication between the locals and the guests. If tourists want to gain an understanding of a culture and interact with locals on a deeper level, these volunteer tourists believe that volunteer tourism experiences provide better opportunities to fulfil these desires compared to other forms of tourism.

6.2   Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study aimed to explore the volunteer tourism phenomenon by using a variety of volunteer tourists' experiences rather than a particular type of volunteer tourist or volunteer tourism organisation; however, it was limited by time and resources. Future research could confirm this study's findings on a larger scale, which would be beneficial to volunteer tourism research. Future research should interview more volunteer tourists in order to reach data saturation in regards to volunteer tourism opportunities, their motives for participating in volunteer tourism, and their attained experiences. A larger scale study could further explore volunteer tourists' motives against their demographics, which would help researchers and volunteer tourism organisations better understand volunteer tourists and their needs. In addition, it may be worth using a different technique in future research, such as focus groups, to verify participants' motives and attained experiences.

Interestingly, the results showed that the participants volunteered in countries that were near New Zealand (Asia and the Pacific Islands), which differs from Wearing's (2001) popular volunteer tourism locations (Central America, South America, and Africa). This finding brings up more questions about volunteer tourism. How do volunteer tourists seek and choose their volunteer tourism trips? Is a 'popular' volunteer tourism location dependent on the area the participants come from? Future research could seek to answer these questions, which would be valuable to volunteer tourism organisations and tourism researchers.

Again, due to time and resource limitations, this research did not study each volunteer tourism organisation separately to discover their programme framework and reputation. Thus, some of the volunteer tourism programmes may have only had a small amount of involvement with the community or environment, or they were not sensitive to the locals' needs and interests.

This may have been applied in the study's example of the medical volunteer tourists who felt that they did not help the local community because of differences in medical technology.

It could be argued from this study that some volunteer tourism experiences are perceived as more 'authentic' than others are. Some volunteer projects are too short in duration, which may affect how sincerely the volunteer tourists interact with the host community; however, this study found that participants on short programmes still found their experiences valuable, and that they still perceived their experiences as more sincere than their non-volunteer tourism experiences. It can also be argued that some volunteer experiences do not explain the meaning behind a culture's events or traditions, which does not provide an 'authentic' experience because the tourist does not truly understand or appreciate the culture (Broad, 2003). This study did not explore these issues, and further research is suggested to address them.

Additionally, sometimes it is debatable that a host community feels that volunteer tourists are really helping. In other words, does bringing tourists 'back stage' into sincere communication with a culture have more negative than positive impacts? If volunteer tourists go into a community to make a difference, is the difference desired by the local community, and does the local community even have a decision in the matter? Does the host community suffer from the demonstration effect by copying the culture of the visiting guests? Does the sincere encounter and 'back stage' access to the Other still commodify them? Due to time limitations, this study did not interview the host communities of the variety of volunteer tourism experiences and destinations. Therefore, the implications of this research only show one side of the scenario, that of the perceptions of the volunteer tourists. This dissertation did not explore how 'authentic' the hosts felt their interaction with the volunteer tourists was, or if the volunteer tourists were actually in a 'behind-the-scenes' scenario. It is important to get

the local community's perspective on these issues. Future research could investigate the perceptions of the host communities and the impacts of volunteer tourists on the community and culture. In the end, each volunteer organisation, volunteer tourist, and host community scenario may bring a different perspective to the 'authenticity' of volunteer tourism.

Although this research had limitations, it is hoped that the results of the study can be a starting point for further research into the role of authenticity in volunteer tourism. Even with all the criticisms of authenticity in tourism research, it is clear that authenticity will not disappear and may continue to be debated in tourism research for quite a long time. Likewise, the increase in the amount of organisations and the variety of volunteer projects further proves that volunteer tourism is on the rise and does not seem to be fading any time soon. In summary, volunteer tourism can provide life-changing experiences and a sense of satisfaction and benefits. It can provide a behind-the-scenes look at the daily lives of a host community, which can lead to more sincere interaction, involvement, and communication with them as perceived by the participants. It has been suggested that leisure's true meaning comes from four dimensions: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. With these dimensions, there is a quest for inner freedom, perceived self-worth, significance, and a sense of values. Based on the literature and the results of this study, it is suggested that volunteer tourism pursues all of these dimensions (Frankl, 1997, as cited in Novelli, 2005).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: VSA Letter

20 November 2007

Deborah Snelson
CEO
Volunteer Service Abroad
P O Box 12 246
WELLINGTON

Dear Ms. Snelson

Permission for dissertation research

I am writing for permission to contact VSA participants for interviews. I am a postgraduate student at Lincoln University in Christchurch, New Zealand studying my Masters of Applied Science in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. My thesis work is on volunteer tourism and the perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists.

I received your contact information from Shona Jennings. She suggested I contact you for permission to obtain contact information from VSA participants and instructed me as to what you require to make your decision. Attached is my research proposal that outlines research objectives, research methods, ethical considerations, tentative interview questions, and a literature background to my research topic.

My research requires 20 interviewees who have participated in volunteer tourism holidays. Interviewees will need to have participated in a holiday with a volunteering component of one week and up to one year, not more than ten (10) years ago, in any discipline. The interviewees will be female and male, age eighteen (18) and older, with a good comprehension of the English language. As per my discussion with Shona, it seems that participants of Addventure VSA may be a better fit for my research. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate obtaining contact information for Addventure VSA participants, preferably participants in the Canterbury region.

In regards to ethical considerations, prospective participant's names and phone numbers will be used only to contact the prospective participants for a possible interview. Anonymity will be assured by using only pseudonyms in any written or oral presentations. No individually identifying information for the participants, their volunteer projects, or the organisation will be presented in any form. The enclosed research proposal discusses further detail about ethical considerations.

Please let me know if you need anything else from me to make your decision. I hope to complete my interviews by the end of December 2007. I do realise how time consuming these requests are for VSA. Please know that access to Addventure VSA participants would make all the difference for my dissertation research.

Yours sincerely,

Kerri Carter, Masters student, ESDD   **Joanna Fountain, Supervisor, ESDD**
(03) 325-2754   (03) 325-3838 Ext. 8767
kiwi_carter@hotmail.com   fountaij@lincoln.ac.nz

ID Number:

Lincoln University Environmental Society and Design Division
Research Information Sheet

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled
Volunteer tourism: The perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists

This project is part of my Master of Applied Science dissertation at Lincoln University. The aim of this project is to explore why people participate in volunteer tourism and what volunteer tourists get out of the experience.

You have been contacted as a prospective participant in this study because you have been a volunteer tourist within the past ten years.   I received your contact information from a friend who said you participated in volunteer tourism. The results of the project will help determine the benefits of volunteer tourism, and help researchers understand why people participate in volunteer tourism experiences.

Your participation in this project will involve a 45-60 minute interview asking questions about your volunteer tourism involvement and activities, as well as your motives for participating in volunteer tourism. The interview will be recorded only with your permission. During the interview, demographic characteristics will be collected for further data research.

You will be asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge your voluntary participation in the study. You may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw your data up until December 31, 2007. If you do withdraw at any stage, any information you have provided will be destroyed.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to your consent forms and data, and all consent forms and data will be kept separately under lock and key and password protection. The researcher and supervisor will be pleased to discuss any questions you have about participation in the project.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. Any written presentation of the data will contain only pseudonyms, and all identifying characteristics will be removed.

Researcher: **Supervisor:**
Kerri Carter   **Dr. Joanna Fountain**
carterk@lincoln.ac.nz   **fountaij@lincoln.ac.nz**
                                                Lincoln University, ESDD
                                                  P.O. Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand

The project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

Consent Form
Volunteer tourism: The perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may withdraw from the project up until December 31, 2007, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Name: _____

ID Number:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

<u>Volunteer Tourism: The perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists</u>

Date:	Location:
Start Time:	End Time:

<u>About Me</u>

This project is part of my Master of Applied Science dissertation at Lincoln University.

<u>Purpose</u>

The aim of this project is to explore why people participate in volunteer tourism and what volunteer tourists get out of the experience. The results of the project will help determine the benefits of volunteer tourism, and help researchers understand why people participate in volunteer tourism experiences.

<u>Why Chosen</u>

You have been contacted as a prospective participant in this study because you have been a volunteer tourist within the past ten years.   I received your contact information from _____ who said you participated in volunteer tourism.

<u>What's Required</u>

Your participation in this project will involve a 30-40 minute interview asking questions about your volunteer tourism involvement and activities, as well as your motives for participating in volunteer tourism.

<u>Confidentiality and Anonymity</u>

You will remain anonymous in any written reports coming from the study, and your responses will be treated confidentially. Any written presentation of the data will contain only pseudonyms, and all identifying characteristics will be removed.

<u>Questioning</u>

Not all of the questions may apply to you, but I'm only interested in your opinions and personal experiences. You may interrupt the interview, ask for clarification, or criticise a question.

<u>Permission to Tape the Interview</u>

Can I have permission to tape record the interview so I can pay attention to what you say?

<u>Consent Form</u>

Please sign the consent form to acknowledge your voluntary participation in the study and to acknowledge that you may decline to answer any question. You may withdraw your data up until December 31, 2007. If you do withdraw at any stage, any information you have provided will be destroyed.

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Demographics

1. What is your highest level of education?
2. What is your age range?
3. What is your family composition?
   a. If you have kids, are they still living at home?
4. What is your current occupation?

Volunteering

I just want to know about any general volunteering you do or have done.

1. How would you define a volunteer?
2. Do you currently do volunteer work?

   If yes:

   a. What types of volunteering do you currently do?
   b. Do you volunteer through an organisation?
   c. How long have you done this?
3. Have you done volunteer work in the past?

   If yes:

   a. What types of volunteering have you done?
   b. Did you volunteer through an organisation?
   c. How long did you do this?
   d. Why did you stop this activity?
4. Do any of your friends and family also volunteer with you at these activities?

   If yes:

   a. Who volunteers with you?
5. Does your family have a history of volunteering, or not?
6. How did you get into volunteering?
7. Why do you choose to volunteer your time?

Volunteer Tourism

Volunteer tourism applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that involve at least some volunteer work. This might involve working with the poor, needy or sick, restoring natural or built environments or conducting research into aspects of society or environment.

1. How many times have you participated in a form of volunteer tourism?

   I'd like you to tell me about each of these experiences you have done in the past 10 years.

   a. Where did you go?

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

     b.   When did you go?

     c.   What was your age at the time you did this trip?

     d.   What type of volunteer work were you doing there?

     e.   Did you get paid to do this work in any way, including a stipend?

     f.   Did you do the volunteering through an organisation?

          i. Why or why not?

          ii. If yes, which organisation did you use?

     g.   How long was your total trip?

     h.   How long did you volunteer during the trip?

     i.   What types of activities did you do during the volunteering part?

     j.   What types of travel or tourist activities did you do during that trip?

          i. Did you interact with any of the locals during these activities?

               1. If so, how?

               2. How does this interaction compare to the interaction you had with locals during the volunteering part of your trip?

     k.   How did you find out about this opportunity?

     l.   Was this volunteer tourism experience(s) different from other "regular" holidays you've been on?

          i. In what ways?

     m. Was the experience different from what you expected?

          i. In what ways?

     n.   Did you face any challenges by participating in this trip(s)?

          i. Why or why not?

Thinking about your overall experience of volunteer tourism:

2.   Why have you volunteered while on holiday?

     a.   What made you choose to volunteer while on holiday instead of just taking a "normal" holiday?

     b.   What did the volunteering aspect do for your holiday?

     c.   What did you think the volunteering aspect would do for your holiday?

3.   Do you think that your volunteering experience(s) have helped you to get to know a culture better?

     a.   Why or why not?

     b.   If so, please explain how you got to know the culture better.

4.   Do you think that your volunteering experience(s) have helped you to get to know other people better?

     a.   Why or why not?

     b.   If so, please explain how.

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

     c.   Who did you get to know better?

     d.   How did you get to know them better?

5. Do you think that your volunteering experience(s) have changed your perceptions of the world?

     a.   In what ways?

     b.   Please explain how.

6. Do you think that your volunteering experience(s) have changed your perceptions about your own life?

     a.   In what ways?

     b.   Please explain how.

7. Do you think that your volunteering experience(s) have taught you anything?

     a.   Why or why not?

     b.   If so, please explain what your volunteering experiences have taught you.

8. What would you say was your biggest experience from your volunteering experience(s)?

     a.   Explain.

9. Would you volunteer again on another holiday?

     a.   <u>Why or why not?</u>