

Addressing Cultural Vulnerabilities in Arctic Tourism: Kindness as ‘Third Space’

by

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AUTHOR'S DELCARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

The changing climate and its impending impacts on Northern regions has ultimately initiated increased interest in Arctic tourism, providing tourists with a rationale for travel to these regions before they deteriorate further, or completely vanish (Lemelin et al., 2010; Hall & Saarinen, 2010). Previous research examining impacts of tourism in Arctic regions denotes that when tourism is introduced into rural and sparsely populated arctic regions, local communities may become overwhelmed by the influx of visitors, causing various forms of social tension, and more prominent feelings of invasion and vulnerability (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Kajan, 2014). While there is evidence that tourism can easily foster impersonal and hostile relationships between tourists and host populations, it is imperative to also recognize that trust and understanding between cultures in tourism *can* exist in situations or encounters where tourists and hosts can move beyond the prescriptions or constructions that solidify cultural difference, and beyond “the constraints of a dominant hegemonic culture,” into what is termed *the third space* – a space that creates an intercultural context for symbolic interaction (Wearing & Wearing, 2006, p. 153). Using tourism in Iceland as a context, this thesis seeks to define and discuss the *third space* framework through the narratives of Icelandic hosts and visiting tourists, and their positive encounters of kindness and responsibility. Results of this ethnographic inquiry revealed that such encounters do have the potential to bridge initial feelings of cultural difference and vulnerability, ultimately creating a space of mutual understanding and cultural learning between the host and tourist, and enabling increased resiliency among the host population. This study also revealed specific social/cultural, spatial/environmental, and temporal circumstances enabling kindness to function in a tourism context.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“It is to be hoped that Bhabha’s, deep but refreshing metaphorocity about split locations and fractured identities can do much to help those who work in tourism studies to demassify the supposed difference found in travel and tourism settings across the globe” (Hollinshead, 2004, p.36).

1.1 Situating the research problem and rationale

Geographic isolation and challenging climates that were once deterrents for travel to Northern regions, are now becoming a main motivation for tourist arrivals (Stewart et al., 2005). The changing climate and its impending impacts on Northern regions has also initiated increased interest in Arctic tourism, ultimately providing tourists with a rationale for travel to these regions before they deteriorate further, or completely vanish (Lemelin et al., 2010; Hall & Saarinen, 2010). With this rise in motivation for travel, combined with improved accessibility through air and cruise ship transport, visitor arrivals and participation in Arctic tourism activities continues to increase (Mason et al., 2000; Hall & Saarinen, 2011; Kajan, 2014). As articulated by Hall and Saarinen (2010) in an attempt to define and outline the dimensions of Arctic tourism, “tourism is deeply embedded in processes of change that are occurring in the world’s polar regions” (p. 463), and as tourism activity intensifies in these areas, so too has the need to address issues of environmental, social, and cultural vulnerability (Mason, 1997; Kajan, 2014; Lemelin et al., 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011).

Along with the overall increased interest in the North, Iceland, being the world’s only cold-water island sovereign state, represents an Arctic region that has gained prominent attention among tourists over the past decade, with annual visitor arrivals exceeding one million (Ferdamalastofa, 2015). As a country that has historically struggled economically, tourism in Iceland was originally presented and promoted as a tool for economic diversification, and has

now expanded into becoming the country's second largest sector following fisheries, and continues to develop (Johannesson et al., 2010; Olafsfottir & Runnstrom, 2011). Similar to other island destinations, Iceland struggles with tourism seasonality, the summer high season drawing in the most visitors, which annually is more than double that of the host population (Johannesson et al., 2010; Ferdamalastofa, 2015). Iceland's island environment ultimately presents a unique and complex setting for tourism development, and is faced with a number of other challenges, including access, high cost of imported goods, environmental fragility, and "the socio-cultural consequences of developing tourism within small, isolated and often strongly self-reliant communities" (Baldacchino, 2006a, p. 280-281). Much of the tourism research in the context of Iceland has focused on tourism growth, economic performance, and the role of nature and Arctic landscapes within Icelandic tourism (Johannesson et al., 2010; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010). While some social concerns have been acknowledged in the literature regarding rising tourist numbers, crowding, and lack of carrying capacity policies (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Johannesson et al., 2010; Kajan, 2014), there has been little focus specifically on how this rapid growth of tourism development and increasing tourist arrivals are affecting the host population.

Relatedly, when tourism is introduced into rural and sparsely populated arctic regions, local communities may become overwhelmed by the influx of visitors, causing various forms of social tension, and more prominent feelings of invasion and vulnerability (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Kajan, 2014). In the context of Arctic regions, researchers have described vulnerability as an Arctic community's or region's susceptibility to change, along with the potential or anticipated risks associated with such change, resulting from tourism impacts (Keskitalo, 2012; Stewart et al., 2011; Smit & Hovelsrud, 2010). Stewart, Draper and Dawson (2011) identify the sociocultural environment of Arctic communities as one area that can be affected or become

vulnerable as a result of tourism changes. In looking specifically at vulnerability stemming from social and cultural impacts, Keskitalo (2012) states that the focus is “on the risk to the actors’ livelihoods – the exposure of groups of people or individuals to stress as a result of impacts” (p. 15). Also embedded in this notion of cultural vulnerability in tourism is the inherent cultural disconnect between visiting tourists and local host populations, and although Arctic tourism research has broached the topic of vulnerability from a variety of angles, research in this area has yet to sufficiently consider, let alone understand, how cultural vulnerabilities at the level of Arctic regions like Iceland might be intensified or alleviated in relation to the presence of Arctic tourists and tourism activities. In a recent article titled *Iceland for Everyone*, The Reykjavik Grapevine newspaper aptly addressed some relevant social issues concerning feelings of locals towards the growing presence of tourists, stating:

“To be fair, it’s hard when you’re selling and they’re buying; when they look and act different; trawl the sidewalk, snap photos of regular people’s seemingly regular parlors, can’t pronounce any word in your language, including your name; when they spawn traffic jams; when you have to take a number to show your grandkid Gullfoss; when they shit on your land, refuse to take advice, ignore warning signs, defy common sense, have to be rescued, and refuse at all costs to be shamed. Visitors are as vulnerable as a flock of lambs that destroy as wantonly as a herd of elephants...If luck continues to favor Iceland, and visitors arrive in ever greater numbers, it may be harder still for Icelanders to retain the solidarity and civility of hosts and stewards of a beautiful and dangerous land in a world of blurring differences (Turner, 2016).

This depiction of tourism and tourists in the media suggests that even though tourism in Iceland is still relatively new and major socio-cultural impacts from tourism have yet to be thoroughly documented or researched, there is still a need to address the increasing social concerns as tourism continues to develop and change.

Relatedly, social tensions and feelings of invasion resulting from the volume of visitors to Arctic destinations like Iceland may be coupled with other factors influencing social and cultural

vulnerability that arise in how tourists and hosts relate and interact with one another. The complex, dynamic, and catalyzing nature of tourism can be a powerful force in broadening the difference or solidifying the gap between the visiting tourist and the destination's host population. Regardless of the diversity between cultures involved, the consumptive and brief nature of tourism activities often creates a largely impersonal and sometimes-hostile space for social encounters between tourists and hosts, making these relationships in tourism largely based on a "basic lack of trust" (Hunter, 2001, p. 42). The impersonal encounters that define the host-tourist relationship may occur when barriers exist to successful communication and shared social experiences or meanings (Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006), resulting in the accentuation of cultural difference or *othering* (Hunter, 2001). Cultural *othering* in tourism can also be derived from the colonizing nature of tourism, as well as the hegemonic power relations and social constructions that induce notions of superiority and inferiority between cultures, specifically when tourism is considered a consumable product (Hunter, 2001). Although this host-tourist disconnect is not a new discovery, this dichotomy is still a relevant issue in many tourism contexts, including Arctic tourism. As the presence of tourists and tourism activities in these regions increase, the ways in which hosts and tourists interact with one another is a topic of research within tourism academia that should not be overlooked (Hunter, 2001).

Despite the potential for tourism to easily foster impersonal and hostile relationships between tourists and host populations, there is evidence that trust and understanding between cultures in tourism *can* exist in situations or encounters where tourists and hosts "break down, destabilize, and reconstruct as hybrid the *othering* created by cultural prescriptiveness" (Wearing & Wearing, 2006, p. 161). More explicitly, there is potential for tourists and hosts to move beyond the prescriptions or constructions that solidify cultural difference, and beyond "the

constraints of a dominant hegemonic culture,” into what is termed *the third space* – a space that creates an intercultural context for symbolic interaction (Wearing & Wearing, 2006, p. 153). As an area that has not been significantly explored within the tourism literature, the idea of the *third space* represents the potential for trust and understanding between cultures that would otherwise be disconnected (Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Bhabha, 1994). Stemming from Bhabha’s (1994) seminal work looking at cultural hybridity, a small number of scholars have engaged the concept of *third space* in tourism, challenging the dominant negative perspective regarding tourist-host encounters, and suggesting the potential for tourism spaces that foster cohesion, understanding and trust (Hollinshead, 1998, 2004; Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Amoamo, 2007). In this sense, the hybrid *third space* between cultures already exists, but is often ignored or unclear when we are caught up in the arbitrary and socially constructed differences that can exist between cultures. Wearing and Wearing (2006) suggest, “that the tourist and host in hybridized cultures can have possibilities to cross over their own cultural boundaries, the tourist, not as invader, but as imaginative traveler, and the host not as own existing in a static culture, but as engaged in an evolving culture” (p. 160). Although there has been a compelling argument for this *third space* to exist in tourism (see Hollinshead, 1998, 2004; Wearing & Wearing, 2006) there is a dearth of research looking specifically at *how a third space* can be fostered, or under *what* circumstances.

Accordingly, there exists a need to further explore the complex social interaction that takes place between hosts and tourists in Arctic contexts, specifically from a more positive or optimistic perspective. While previous research has focused on the host-tourist dichotomy and specifically the ways in which tourists and hosts grapple with cultural difference and power, (see Urry, 1990, 1992; Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Maoz, 2006; MacCannell, 2011),

there has been little focus on how such relationships can be positive, and what the impacts of fostering positive engagement in the host-tourist relationship ultimately look like. In a call for further research on social interaction within tourism, Glover and Filep (2015) note the relevance of looking at tourism encounters through a lens of positive psychology to explore the potential for the brief encounters within tourism to potentially foster notions of social capital and cultural bridging between strangers through acts of kindness, generosity and gratitude. They state that future research could expand on knowledge related to the relationships between tourists and hosts, “by introducing fresh perspectives on gratitude and generosity of strangers” (Glover & Filep, 2015, p. 161). Also related, is the durability of relationships formed within tourism contexts, and the potential for relationships developed through brief social interactions in tourism to be sustained beyond the initial tourism encounter (Glover & Filep, 2015).

Thus, a question remains regarding the potential for positive encounters between hosts and tourists in Arctic regions that might be vulnerable to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, to act as a *third space* that fosters trust and understanding within the overall host-tourist relationship. Based upon previous research examining cultural vulnerability (Mason, 1997; Kajan, 2014; Lemelin et al., 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011); the host-tourist relationship (Sin, 2010; van der Duim, Peters, & Wearing, 2005); *third space* (Bhabha, 1994; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004; Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006); and kindness (Glover & Filep, 2015); there is evidence that exploring tourism encounters that emerge out of kindness can ultimately help to address emerging issues of vulnerability resulting from Arctic tourism activities and the ways in which tourists and hosts interact with one another.

1.2 Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts, placing emphasis on understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships. The research questions guiding this study focus on understanding the meanings and contexts of kindness, and aim to understand if and how encounters of kindness can begin to address notions of cultural vulnerability in Arctic tourism. The research questions are as follows:

- What meanings do hosts and tourists in Iceland ascribe to their intercultural encounters characterized by kindness?
- What circumstances (spatial/temporal or social/environmental/cultural) enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships?
- How do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of cultural vulnerability?
- How might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships?

1.3 Significance of Study

Situated in an interpretivist paradigm, and informed by symbolic interactionism, this study was approached ethnographically, focusing on the encounters of kindness experienced by Icelandic hosts and international backpackers traveling in Iceland. Through researcher reflexivity and illuminating participant narratives, this thesis attempts to explore kindness in the context of tourism encounters, and to effectively consider how these encounters link to broader tourism concerns, including cultural vulnerability, cultural hybridity and *third space*, and the host-tourist relationship. Iceland was chosen as the context for this study because of its current and rapid

development as an Arctic tourism industry that welcomes over one million visitors annually; and because of the potential for knowledge transfer and practical implications as it continues to develop as an Arctic tourism destination. Additionally, backpackers were chosen specifically to represent the ‘tourists’ in this study, due to the largely popular backpacking and hiking culture in Iceland; and due to the assumption that this form of tourist often spends a longer time in the destination, potentially having more time to interact with the local population, and more time to reflect on these interactions.

It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will have implications for rural Arctic communities in dealing with feelings of isolation or invasion due to integration of tourists, providing a framework for fostering the *third space* to bridge the cultural differences and associated vulnerabilities that are often inherent within tourism operations. Relatedly, through exploring host-tourist relationships in the more established context of Iceland, lessons learned may also be transferable for application to tourism management and development strategies in other developing Arctic destinations. As this topic has not been adequately explored, this thesis aims to address a number of gaps in tourism literature, and will hopefully generate discussion and act as a foundation for future research examining the significance of kindness between tourists and hosts within Arctic regions, and future research exploring how vulnerabilities associated with Arctic tourism development may be better understood, addressed, and/or alleviated.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis will continue as follows: Chapter Two presents an examination of the existing, relevant literature surrounding this topic, including Arctic tourism and associated vulnerabilities, the host-tourist relationship, and backpacking. Informed by these three main

bodies of literature, the latter part of Chapter Two will provide a specific context for this study through examining relevant literature surrounding tourism in Iceland, followed by a review of literature examining kindness and *third space*. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods used to collect the data, followed by an overview of the approaches to analyze, interpret, and represent the outcomes of this study. The outcomes of this study are discussed in Chapter Four, while further discussion and connections to the literature are provided in Chapter Five. Chapter Six will summarize and conclude this thesis, and provide recommendations for future research. It is also important to note that researcher reflexivity was a key component to this study's methodology, and therefore journal reflections and personal photography will be embedded throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparing to further explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts, and to understand the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships, it is important to first explore the relevant literature surrounding this topic. The following review of literature will provide an overview of the main research topics and illuminate both research gaps and relevance for undertaking this specific study. Table 1 illustrates a summary of the overarching bodies of literature drawn upon within this study.

Table 1
Summary of Reviewed Literature

2.1 Tourism in Arctic Regions 2.1.1 Dependence on the Natural Environment 2.1.2 Cultural Vulnerability
2.2 The Host Tourist-Relationship 2.2.1 The “Gaze” 2.2.2 The “Other”
2.3 Backpacking 2.3.1 The Backpacker as a Distinct Form of Tourist 3.3.2 Social Implications of Backpacking 3.3.3 Cultural Difference
2.4 Iceland as an Arctic Tourism Destination 2.4.1 Tourism Trends in Iceland 2.4.2 Nature-Based Tourism 2.4.3 Social Implications of Icelandic Tourism
2.5 Kindness 2.5.1 Responsibility and Care 2.5.2 The Sharing Economy
2.6 The <i>Third Space</i>
2.7 Summary of Reviewed Literature

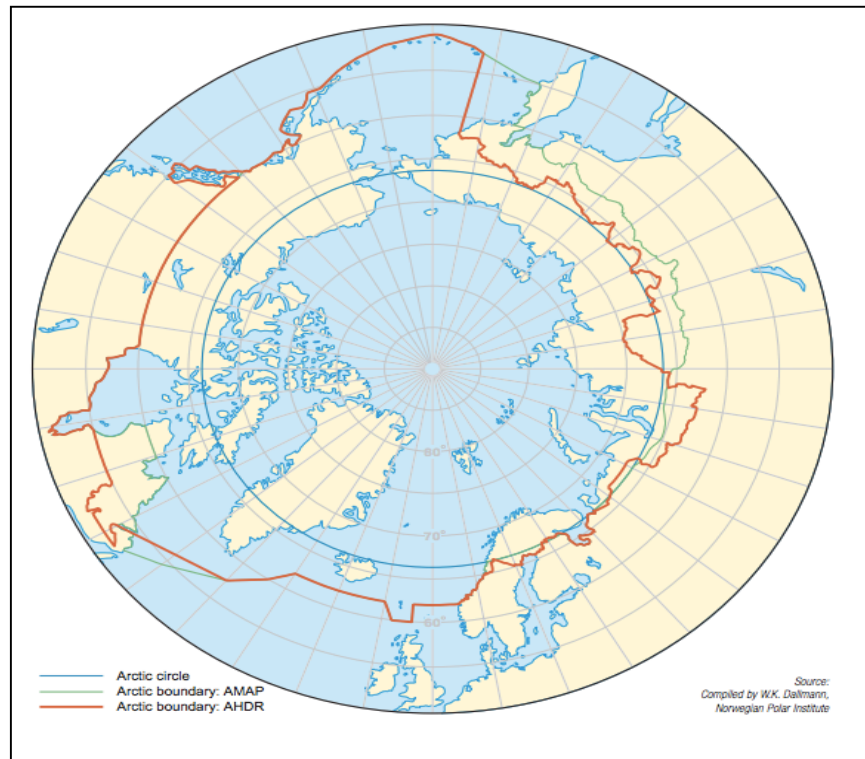
Initial discussion will focus on the three main bodies of literature informing this thesis, which include Arctic tourism, and associated vulnerabilities; the host-tourist relationship and associated gazes; and backpacking as a specific form of travel. In addition, to further situate and provide context for this study, a review of academic literature regarding Iceland as a tourism

destination is included. Lastly, the final sections of this chapter will introduce and discuss discourse on kindness and *third space* to narrow the scope and focus for this study. Ultimately, the intention of this review is to set the stage for the research carried out in this study, and to effectively provide a conceptual foundation for understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness in Iceland serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships.

2.1 Tourism in Arctic Regions

Although expeditions to Arctic regions date back to the 18th century, up until recently these regions were rarely identified as potential travel destinations, and often poorly understood by both travelers and academic scholars (Stewart et al., 2005; Snyder & Stonehouse, 2007; Maher, 2007). These regions – often referred to as the Arctic, North, or Circumpolar North – encompass eight sovereign nations, inclusive of Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Northern Russia, Northern Canada, and Alaska in The United States (see Figure 1) (AHDR, 2004; Stewart et al., 2005; Snyder & Stonehouse, 2007; Maher, 2007). Arctic regions are often defined by their geographical remoteness combined with geophysical determinants such as cold climates, vast wilderness, and often a high degree of environmental vulnerability (Stewart et al., 2005; Viken, 2013). Due to the geographical remoteness that categorizes many Arctic regions, Arctic communities can also be recognized through their “high dependency on and extensive use of natural resources” (Kajan, 2014 p. 287). Furthermore, the unique, challenging, and sometimes-fragile components that encompass these regions can present substantial challenges in terms of management and planning for the environment and the local economy and culture, ultimately making tourism in these areas a complex and complicated field of study (Stewart et al., 2005; Kajan, 2014; Viken, 2013).

Figure 1: Regional map of the Arctic (Arctic Human Development Report, 2004; Cited by Maher, 2013)



Though tourism activity in many of the world’s Arctic regions has slowly and gradually developed over time, there has been a recent increase in both tourism development and tourist arrivals throughout the last decade (Maher, 2007; Stewart et al., 2005; Lemelin et al., 2010). The geographic isolation and challenging climates that were once deterrents for travel to Arctic regions, have now become a main motivation for tourist arrivals (Stewart & Johnston, 2005; Nutall, 2008; Kajan, 2014). In an attempt to articulate the changes observed in Arctic tourism, Johannesson and Huijbens (2010) express that this increased demand for Arctic travel, combined with transportation development and greater accessibility to these regions “has spurred a concomitant growth and diversification in the production of tourist destinations and touristic spaces” (p. 419). Climate change and its resulting impacts on melting of sea ice have drastically changed the degree of accessibility to areas that were once difficult to access (Stewart et al.,

2005; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010), and in turn “catapulting tourism development at an accelerated rate” (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). This increase in tourist arrivals in Arctic regions has also been attributed to tourist perceptions of Arctic regions and their perceived vulnerability to environmental change, creating an area of interest for “last chance tourism” (Lemelin et al., 2010, p. 487). Researchers evaluating the spurred growth in arrivals note that there has been a “mini boom” in Arctic tourism, determining that the “potential loss of these unique polar landscapes through global climate change provides a rationale for some tourists to visit these areas before they disappear” (p. 478). Thus, what used to be a relatively underrated or poorly understood destination for travel, has rapidly expanded to cater to over three million documented tourists annually, and is consistently expanding (Stewart et al., 2005; Maher, 2007; Lemelin et al., 2010; Dawson et al., 2011).

Globally, tourism has become a viable method for economies to diversify and expand outside of their primary exports – a method that has certainly been exemplified in many Northern destinations. In some Arctic regions with few economic opportunities, tourism has become a main industry, playing an important role in local economies, and significantly altering the economic, social, and political settings of many Arctic communities with attractive natural and cultural resources (Stewart et al., 2005; Kajan, 2014). Because of the significant economic impacts resulting from tourism, many national and regional governments have acknowledged and encouraged tourism development as a tool for economic diversification, with many tourism initiatives receiving government support and funding (Kajan, 2013).

Although generally regarded as a positive change, the push for tourism development in Arctic regions and its impact on surrounding economies has also been extensively critiqued (Viken, 2013; Kajan, 2014; Lemelin et al., 2010). Fay and Karlsdottir (2011) found that because

of documented feelings of invasion, and associated impacts on the natural environment, small Arctic communities “prefer tourism scenarios that increase local employment without bringing in a large number of tourists through the community” (p. 74). Some Arctic tourism scholars have also noted the unlikely outcome of economic benefits outweighing social and cultural consequences from tourism expansion (Adams, 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Kajan, 2014); and others have referred to tourism development as a basic way in which to colonize Arctic communities and Northern indigenous societies (Mason, 1997; Viken, 2013).

As the Arctic tourism industry expands, so too does the diversity of tourism activities offered. Because of the distinct climatic features of Arctic regions, many tourists visit with their main intention being to participate in nature-based tourism activities. Lundmark (2010) states that the natural landscapes encountered in Arctic regions “are varied, and include lakes, forests, mountains, sea and other dramatic environments” (p. 136), making these regions common for ecotourism or adventure tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, climbing, and camping (Lundmark, 2010; Lemelin et al., 2010). Other prominent forms of Arctic tourism activities are wildlife viewing, which offers tourists the opportunity to observe wildlife (polar bears and other wildlife unique to these areas), in their natural habitats (Lemelin et al., 2010; Lundmark, 2010); as well as more culturally focused tourism activities that involve heritage sites or indigenous communities (Kajan, 2014). The range of the activities in Arctic regions is continually increasing, with many of these activities and attractions now being showcased at common cruise ports, allowing many cruise tourists to experience a wide variety of Arctic activities and regions in a short amount of time (Adams, 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011).

2.1.1 Dependence on the Natural Environment

As many of the tourism activities in these regions are highly dependent on the natural

environment, environmental vulnerability has been a key topic of study in Arctic tourism research (Kajaan, 2014; Lemelin et al., 2010; Stewart & Johnston, 2005; Hall & Saarinen, 2010). Due to the impending impacts of climate change, Stewart and Johnson (2004) found that Arctic regions are generally fragile, and therefore present challenges for tourism planning and development. Relatedly, Saarinen (2014) states, climate change-related issues in Arctic regions are “important and increasingly crucial areas of study” (p.1), these issues undeniably requiring a strategic approach to the development and management of tourism activities to appropriately deal with environmental change (Saarinen, 2014; Mason, 1997). In addition to noticeable environmental change, environmental vulnerability in these areas presents a major challenge for tourism development. In a study exploring sustainable adaptation in Arctic communities, Kajan (2013) found that a systematic connection between tourism and climate change is required “in order to advance sustainable development” (Kajan, 2013 p. 287). For the successful development and management of Arctic tourism activities, environmental vulnerability must be taken into account, as the industry is highly dependent on the natural environment.

2.1.2 Cultural Vulnerability

Arctic tourism is both based on – yet often restricted by, the unique cultural and natural features present in Northern regions. Although the environmental vulnerability of these regions as a result of climate change is an ongoing and urgent concern, local populations can also experience a certain amount of social or cultural vulnerability due to the introduction and influx of tourism into Arctic communities and the resulting relationships with incoming tourists (Saarinen, 2014; Kajan, 2014). As tourism in these regions develops, it is of increasing importance that communities and tourism stakeholders work towards a plan for tourism development and management “that not only protects the environment, but is also connected to

societal needs” (Stewart et al., 2005, p. 389). In exploring regions gaining prominent attention among the tourist market, Kajan (2014) reported that in many regions where tourism is acknowledged as a viable tool to build and diversify the economy, tourist arrivals have exceeded the local population. In one study that looked at social trends in Arctic tourism, Fay and Karlsdottir (2011) found that as large numbers of tourists are introduced into these typically rural and sparsely populated arctic regions, communities can become overwhelmed and experience various forms of social and cultural vulnerability. For example, as tourist areas develop, local communities may be forced to share their natural and cultural resources with a large number of visitors, resulting in social tensions due to resource competition, or even feelings of invasion as outsiders become immersed in their local culture (Kajan, 2014; Hovelsrud et al., 2011; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011).

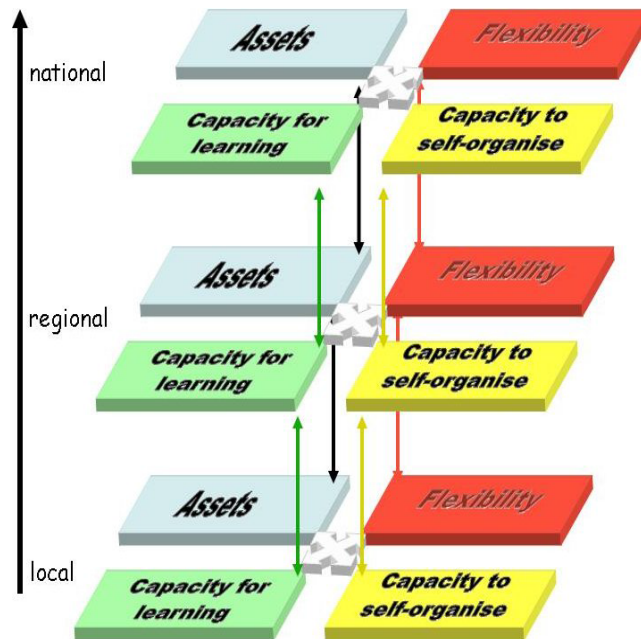
Issues of cultural vulnerability within Arctic communities are discussed at length by Kajan (2014), who argues that “what is constituted as a negative effect is highly dependent on the culture and context, and these attributes of concern are highly local and contextual” (p. 62). This provides a challenge for effective development and management of tourism activities, as there is a tension between the potential for tourism to provide significant opportunities for community development, while also having the potential to simultaneously disrupt what some researchers refer to as “cultural and community cohesion” (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011, p. 75).

In examining vulnerability in tourism research, social adaptation, adaptive capacity, and resilience are terms that are generally interwoven as collateral concepts. In particular, communities deemed vulnerable to tourism change require adaptation strategies for coping with or responding to change, and communities that can easily adapt to change “are more likely to survive – or have a higher adaptive capacity” (Stewart et al., 2011, p. 35). According to some

Arctic researchers, the notion of resilience speaks to the capacity of a community or region to respond to change and stress in way that enables primary system functions to be maintained and vulnerability to be decreased (Stewart et al, 2011; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Kajan, 2014; Hovelsrud & Smit, 2010).

In the context of tourism, social resilience can be regarded as positive or negative. Positive resilience is reflective of a community or system that can absorb multiple impacts before shifting to a state of vulnerability, whereas negative resilience reflects a community, where “an undesirable configuration may persist despite attempts to change it to a desirable one” (Cinner et al., 2009, p. 40). In a study of marine protected areas and surrounding communities, Cinner, Fuentes, and Randriamahazo (2009), found that social resilience was based upon a community’s assets, flexibility, capacity for learning, and capacity to self-organize, with local, regional, and national links. They state, “in a resilient system, one would expect each cluster to be robust and linked at the local, regional, and national levels, [where] a nonresilient system may have a weak cluster or lack linkages across scales” (2009, p. 41) (Figure 2). In looking specifically at the social resilience of communities involved in Arctic tourism, Adams (2010) found that the sociocultural changes inherent to Arctic communities can ultimately reduce social resilience due to the “magnitude and intensity” of incoming tourists (p. 654). Adams argues that the lack of community connectedness and adaptive capacity that leads to non-resilient Arctic communities, not only furthers the disconnect between the host community and incoming visitors, but also can impact the cohesiveness of the community as a whole, and lead to a restructuring of the tourism industry and potential increase of foreign investment and ownership.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Exploring Social Resilience in Tourism (Cinner et al., 2009, p. 41).



Literature in this area has also explored the links between vulnerability and the community’s ability to adapt to social, cultural, and environmental impacts resulting from tourism (Kajan, 2014; Adams, 2010; Grete et al., 2012). Kajan (2014) notes that, similar to resilience, adaptation in the context of social and cultural impacts or vulnerabilities represents the adjustments or changes of the community’s current practices to meet the changes the community is facing. For vulnerable Arctic communities experiencing feelings of invasion due to tourist numbers, adaptation involves building institutional capacity and empowering locals to adapt to changes experienced from tourism (Adams, 2010; Kajan, 2014). In a study looking at adaptation strategies in the context of resource competition, researchers argue that “how Arctic communities allow their natural and cultural resources to be used by large numbers of visitors and whether or not this is viewed as a disruption, depends on the attitude and resources of the community” (Hovelsrud et al., 2011, p. 107). Thus, adaptation and resilience in the context of cultural vulnerability in tourism should incorporate community members and tourism

stakeholders, and act as a fully participatory process aiming to address local concerns (Kajan, 2014).

Tourism literature in the context of social resilience and adaptation tends to focus on the potential negative social impacts that occur with the introduction of tourism into Arctic contexts; however, little has been done to further examine the relationships of tourists and host communities in these contexts, past the initial feelings of social displacement as a result of tourism development (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). Looking further at the interactions and relationships between the host community and the tourists can have implications for planning and management of tourism in Northern contexts (Stewart et al., 2005; Kajan, 2014; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). In their review of polar tourism literature focusing on tourism scenarios in both Arctic and Antarctic regions, Stewart, Draper and Johnston (2005) note that more research is needed to fully understand societal needs related to tourism, and that many cultural tourism issues need to be further addressed and explored. They allude to an apparent dearth of research on Arctic tourism that fully examines these vulnerabilities and relationships between hosts and tourists in polar regions, attributing this gap in research to the potential unwillingness “to subject paying guests to scrutiny” (2005, p. 389). Furthermore, considering the relatively recent increase in travel to some of the world’s Arctic regions, feelings of vulnerability due to tourism and the presence of tourists may still have yet to be expressed, which provides an opportunity for researchers and tourism planners to further understand these vulnerabilities for effective prevention and management.

In order to further explore some of the complexities and vulnerabilities that may surround some Arctic tourism destinations, and to illuminate the relevancy for this particular research

study, the next section will broadly discuss relevant tourism discourse related to the host-tourist relationship, and specific ways in which hosts and tourists interact with one another.

2.1 The Host-Tourist Relationship

It can be assumed that in addition to environmental change and increased tourism activity occurring in Arctic regions, cultural vulnerability and reduced social resilience of Northern communities may also stem from the integration of tourists, and their subsequent relationships with the local population (Hunter, 2001). Examining the relationships between incoming tourists and the locals or hosts of destination communities is not a new area of study in tourism research (see Huang & Lee, 2010; Griffiths & Sharpley, 2012). Tied to sociocultural impacts from tourism on host populations, as well as the overall tourism experience for visitors, understanding the complexity of the interaction between the two groups has been “essential to the planning, development, and promotion of tourism” (Griffiths & Sharpley, 2012, p. 2051). Seminal work within this area of study aimed to conceptualize the interaction between tourists and locals (Doxey, 1975; Butler, 1980; Urry, 1990), and to delve into the arising attitudes and behaviours of local populations regarding tourist arrivals (Rothman, 1978; Urry, 1992; Getz, 1995). Since then, a large focus has been on the more negative outcomes and origins of these encounters (see Maoz, 2006; Urry, 1992; Sin, 2010; Urry & Larsen, 2011), while only a small number of studies have looked to uncover the positive outcomes that may yield from the social interaction and relationship development between hosts and tourists (Heuman, 2005; Wearing & Wearing, 2006). In an attempt to explore the importance of cohesion in tourism relationships, Zhang, Inbakaran and Jackson (2006) emphasize that “as a sociocultural event for both hosts and tourists, tourism cannot be sustainable without a high degree of harmonious relationship between hosts and guests” (p. 191). Relatedly, Griffiths and Sharpley (2010) note that the encounters and

resulting relationships between visiting tourists and the local population are “a manifestation of social interaction, determined by personal values, social roles, and societal norms” (p. 2053). Overall, the host-tourist relationship represents a fundamental component to tourism management and development, yet the understanding of such relationship is highly contextual. Thus, there exists a need to explore the functioning of such relationships in a variety of tourism contexts, looking at both negative and positive origins and outcomes.

2.2.1 The ‘Gaze’

At the heart of the host-tourist literature is Urry’s (1990) concept of the “tourist gaze” which represents the ways in which tourists behave towards and interact with the host population; these ways being regulated by their own culture (Urry, 1990; Urry 1992; Urry & Larsen, 2011). The gaze – or the way in which tourists may interact with hosts – is socially constructed, “subjected to, and transformed by social, cultural, economic and environmental phenomena” (Moufakkir, 2011, p. 10). In this sense, the tourist constructs their gaze before traveling by reading and learning about the destination, focusing on what is different about the host culture from their own, and in turn only seeing what they originally anticipated regarding the host culture. Through this gaze, the tourist fails to see any similarities between the two cultures, which may further solidify the gap between tourist and host (Urry, 1990; Urry, 1992; Hunter, 2001; Moufakkir, 2011; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Building off of Foucault’s (1976) work *Madness and Civilization*, wherein madness or difference in society was seen as a spectacle or something to watch, Urry (1992) expanded on his original concept of the tourist gaze to equate local cultures as a form of “madness” or spectacle in the eyes of tourists (p. 176). In this sense, Urry’s belief was that many of the issues derived from the host-tourist encounter came from the tourist’s perception of the host, equating this encounter to “the equivalent of looking at the mad

behind bars” (Urry, 1992, p. 177). This gaze causes members of the host population to feel exposed under the views of tourists, some even conforming “to the tourists stereotypes, and others [internalizing] the gaze to the point where it becomes their own” (Maoz, p. 225). Ultimately, the power connected to the idea of “gazing at” locals is a root of the cause of negative encounters and cultural difference between hosts and tourists (Hunter, 2011; Maoz, 2006; Moufakkir, 2011; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

The complexity of these encounters was also expanded on to incorporate the “host gaze” within tourism literature (Maoz, 2006; Huang & Lee, 2010; Moufakkir, 2011). Where the construction of the tourist gaze originates from literature and media representations, the gaze in which the hosts view incoming visitors can be based upon previous encounters with tourists of similar backgrounds and cultures (Maoz, 2006; Huang & Lee, 2010). Maoz (2006) states that while closer to reality than the view that tourists might have, the host gaze “is based on extreme stereotypes and images that may also be related to a colonial past” (p. 229) In a study looking at the host gaze in the context of Israeli backpackers in India, Maoz (2006) found that the locals involved in the tourism industry seemed to embody this view of the host gaze, participants referring to all Israeli tourists “as loud, superficial...unsophisticated people” (p. 229). Comparatively, in Moufakkir’s (2011) study on the encounters of Dutch hosts with German and East Asian tourists, he noted the complex characteristics of the host gaze, stating: “not only is the host gaze dynamic, it is also ‘chameleonic’ in the sense that it changes depending on the type of tourists, number of tourists, visibility, of tourists, type of touristic enclave and economic status of the nation of the targeted tourists” (p. 83-84). Similar to the tourist’s perceptions, the way in which the host culture perceives visitors can have a large impact on the extent to which they feel social and culturally vulnerable in the presence of tourism activities (Maoz, 2006; Huang & Lee,

2010; Moufakkir, 2011). Overall, while the notion of the gaze and how it is formed has been thoroughly researched, little has been done to observe or acknowledge if and how these gazes may change, or in what circumstances such gazes could be considered positive.

An important tenet discussed in the literature examining the host and tourist gazes is notion of *difference* the ways that the various groups perceive it. Relatedly, the recognition and appropriation of difference by either culture is what some scholars refer to as *othering* (Hunter, 2001; Wearing et al., 2001; Sin, 2010). The following section will discuss the concept of *the other* in the context of tourism discourse, concluding with Hunter's (2001) discussion of trust

2.2.2 The 'Other'

Related to the sociocultural gap or difference embedded in the gazes of (and between) hosts and tourists discussed in the tourism literature, is the concept of *othering* (Hunter, 2001; Wearing et al., 2001; Sin, 2010). Discussed extensively by Hunter (2001) in regard to tourism encounters, *othering* represents the ways in which "tourists and hosts mutually and conveniently dispersonalize and categorize 'others' by their most immediate functional roles", and is rooted in the often brief and temporary encounters experienced within tourism (Hunter, 2001, p. 42). In this sense, *othering* refers to barriers of difference between cultures that almost seem "exotic," within host-tourism encounters, including race, culture, economy and language (Hunter, 2001). In discussing the disconnect and difference between cultures resulting from these barriers, Hunter expresses that "destinations where the 'other' seems insufficiently exotic, yet persistently uncooperative in language and customs may be referred to those who return as 'undesirable'" (2001, p. 48). While the notion of difference in any society is expected, the short-term and consumptive nature of tourism can potentially be a space that fosters often-hostile ethnic, racial or cultural difference (Hunter, 2001). This difference in tourism encounters can ultimately be

accentuated by potential false expectations tourists may have about the destination's culture, as well as the ways in which the host culture reacts to the tourist's culture. In the context of Israeli backpackers traveling in India, Maoz (2006) found that the reactions of the host community to tourist differences were either through cooperation, offering experiences or products that tourists might associate with familiarity; or responding with *open or veiled* (aggressive or passive) resistance to the backpackers' cultural differences. As such, research by Maoz (2006) indicates the need for tourism research to 1) continually explore the ways in which othering occurs and its impact on the overall host-tourist relationship, and 2) broaden this exploration of othering to various cultures and contexts within tourism.

This section has provided a broad overview of literature surrounding the host-tourist relationship. The ways that tourists and hosts "gaze" and/or "other" are two factors that might contribute to the overall dichotomy of this relationship and how it is perceived in tourism discourse. The literature examining the complexity and negativity surrounding the host-tourist relationship signifies the importance of future research that further explores these complexities, while also attempting to understand how positive aspects of this relationship can be fostered. To further expand on and explore the host-tourist relationship, the following section focuses on the role of the tourist, and more explicitly, the backpacker. Focusing on literature exploring backpacking, the backpacker, and studies examining host-backpacker interaction, the next section will set the stage for exploration of Iceland's backpacking industry as the context for exploring host-tourist encounters and acts of kindness.

2.3 Backpacking

Embedded in the literature exploring the host-tourist relationship, and the potential for a *third space* in tourism encounters, is the assumption that some forms of travel may have the

ability to better foster positive encounters with the host population than others, due to different travel styles, motivations, and subsequent impacts on the destination (Hunter, 2001; Hollinshead, 1998). Backpacking as a distinct form of travel and a potential positive alternative to traditional mass tourism has been extensively explored within the tourism literature from a variety of perspectives, and is broadly defined as a diverse and multi-faceted form of self-organized travel involving a flexible – and often prolonged – travel itinerary (Maoz, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Cohen, 2011; Murphy, 2002). Often noted as a sub-sector of alternative tourism, backpacking has been idealized as a smaller-scale form of tourism that has the potential to foster more local opportunities with less economic leakage than other forms of travel (Spreitzhofer, 2002). However, despite the economic potential and smaller scale, backpacking has also been criticized as a method of travel that is inherently parallel to the often-invasive characteristics of mass tourism (Cohen, 2011; Spreitzhofer, 2002), and its actual impacts are often disputed within the literature (Maoz, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Scheyvens, 2002; Ooi & Laing, 2010). Tourism literature describes its origins in geographic exploration, dating back to the late 17th century, later shifting into what Cohen (1972) coined as “drifting” in the 1960’s-80’s, and into now what is a widely-accepted form of youth budget travel (O’Reilly, 2006; Maoz, 2007).

2.3.1 The Backpacker as a Distinct Form of Tourist

Many tourism scholars have explored the backpacker as a distinct form of tourist with unique and varying motivations (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Sorensen, 2001; Spreitzhofer, 2002; Uriely et al., 2002; O’Reilly, 2006; Maoz, 2006). A broad definition is set forth by Maoz (2007), who defines backpackers as

“self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary. They are often keen to experience the local lifestyle, attempt to ‘look local,’ and cite ‘meeting other people’ as a key motivation. Their recreational activities are likely to focus around nature, culture, or adventure. This pattern is consonant with the

tendency of backpackers to travel more widely than other tourists, seeking unusual routes. Many travel under a strictly controlled budget, often due to the relatively long duration of their journey. They are described as people who search for authentic experiences, a search based on exclusion of other tourists” (p. 123).

Aligning with this definition, in an ethnographic study looking at the travel culture of travelers who identify as backpackers, Sorensen (2001) noted that the term ‘backpacker’ is also a social construction of identity that these travelers assign to themselves, often to distinguish themselves from a regular “tourist”. In terms of motivations for this type of travel, Sorensen states that “many backpacker journeys can be described as self-imposed transitional periods, and for many, self-imposed rites of passage” (2001, p. 853). Relatedly, in a study looking at the motivations of Israeli backpackers, Maoz (2007) found that the majority of her participants were under thirty years old, using this form of travel as a search for meaning, as well as “a form of escape, and as a chance for personal growth” (p. 124). Other studies looking at backpacker motivations have found that social interaction and meeting others was an integral part of the backpacking experience (Murphy, 2002; Maoz, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Howard, 2005; Cohen, 2011), and that many backpackers strive to make a positive contribution to the local economies and environments of the destinations they visit (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Noy, 2004). What also distinguishes these types of travelers are the destinations chosen, which are often more remote and dissimilar to their country of origin (Reichel et al., 2009; Sorensen, 2011; Uriely et al., 2002).

2.3.2 Social Implications of Backpacking

While motivations and characteristics of this type of travel have been observed as mostly positive, the actual behaviour and actions of backpackers recorded at the destination have varied. The negative stereotypes of this type of traveler have been explored extensively within tourism literature (Pearce, 2006; Sorensen, 2001; Larsen et al., 2011; Maoz, 2007), specifically focusing

on media representation and host perceptions (Peel & Steen, 2007), travel characteristics of youth backpackers (Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2012; Jayne et al., 2012), the development of backpacker enclaves (Lloyd, 2006; Brenner & Fricke, 2007; Howard, 2005; Cohen, 2006) and the potential for this type of travel to be invasive and intrusive on the host culture (Peel & Steen, 2007; Maoz, 2006; Peel & Steen, 2007). In a review of Australian print media surrounding backpackers, Peel and Steen (2007) found that there was an overall negative perspective among the local population of the international backpacker, and the sheer volume of independent travelers combined with their negative and persistent behaviour was intrusive and invasive to the local population. Similarly, Jayne, Gibson, Waite and Valentine (2012), found that some of the negative perspectives surrounding the backpacker are a result of the role that drugs and alcohol play in the overall backpacking experience, with most participants reporting that consumption during travel becomes a main element of the culture of backpacking, and is “valued as part of the experience of ‘doing place’” (p. 227). These negative perspectives have also been explored in popular backpacking destinations termed ‘enclaves’, wherein a backpacker ‘bubble’ is formed, ultimately providing a network and infrastructure for independent travelers (Lloyd, 2006). Instead of immersion into the local culture, these spaces become “safe havens where travelers can exert more actual or perceived control over the often culturally confusing outside world” (Lloyd, 2006, p. 65). Some backpacker enclaves have been compared to sites of more institutionalized mass tourism, as studies within popular backpacker spots in Vietnam (Lloyd, 2006), and Khaosan Road in Thailand (Howard, 2005), have reported local dissatisfaction with the behaviours and appearances of international visitors, and the transformation of local cultural sites into more internationally-focused backpacker environments (Howard, 2005). Howard (2005) found that backpackers in Thailand tend to avoid interaction with the local population,

and the ecological and social impacts occurring within the Khaosan Road enclave has caused many locals to relocate. Research exploring the negative impacts of backpacking has ultimately indicated a misconception between perceived and actual motivations and characteristics of this form of travel.

Although much of the recent research regarding backpacking has been on the negative perceptions of the backpacker, and the close resemblance of this form of travel to that of traditional mass tourism (Pearce, 2006), some studies have made the case for the presence of backpackers as having predominantly positive impact on the host community (Scheyvens, 2002; Scheyvens, 2006; Hampton, 1998; Hampton, 2005; Hunter, 2001). Noting the difference in types of visitors and their abilities to build and foster intercultural trust within tourism destinations, Hunter (2001) argues that backpackers characteristically aim to broaden cultural perspectives through interaction, and look specifically to experience different worldviews and cultures. Unlike the mass tourist, where culture is often already staged and packaged, the traveler or backpacker is often seen as more likely to put an effort into establishing and building intercultural trust and communication (Hunter, 2001; Ooi & Laing, 2010; Cohen, 2011; Scheyvens, 2002; Scheyvens, 2006). In regard to building trust and fostering positive encounters, it is also argued that this type of traveler “might be more self-aware of his [or] her role as visitor in another cultural setting” (Hunter, 2001, p. 63). Relatedly, a number of studies have made the case for backpackers as being able to make positive economic, environmental, and cultural contributions to host populations due to local spending, relatively low carbon footprints, and length of travel time (Scheyvens, 2002; Westerhaussen & Macbeth, 2003; Ooi & Laing, 2010), and in turn, noting the ability to build and foster trust (Hunter, 2001; Cohen, 2011).

Similarly, in their study of backpacker and volunteer motivations for travel, Ooi and Laing found that there is often overlap between volunteer tourists and backpackers in terms of positive contributions, and “the type of job opportunities provided by backpacker tourism, including the support of locally owned restaurants and accommodation facilities, arguably leads to greater self-fulfillment and self-determination for small communities” (p. 192). Similar outcomes were also exemplified in Scheyvens’ (2002) research exploring backpacking and third world development, the researcher noting that backpacking and the subsequent interactions that transpire among backpackers and the host populations can also “lead to a revitalization of traditional culture, respect for the knowledge of elders, and pride in traditional aspects of one’s culture” (p. 152). Relatedly, research exploring Byron Bay as a common tourist destination along the backpacking route in Australia, Westerhaussen and Macbeth (2003) found that both locals and backpackers recorded similar concerns regarding the consistent development of the beach environment, and because backpackers “provide a ready market in which authenticity, individuality, colour, and nature are appreciated” (p. 83), they have become natural allies amongst the host community to fight for local control and sustainability.

2.3.3 Cultural Difference

Because many of these motivations and travel characteristics (both positive and negative) have been generalized among all backpackers within tourism literature, there has been criticism towards referring to this group as a single entity (Maoz, 2007; Cohen, 2011; Reichel et al., 2009; Noy, 2004; Huang, 2008), as “there appear to be differences among backpackers from different countries in their perception of freedom, escapism, and moratorium in their travel motivations” (Maoz, 2007, p. 136). Related to the concepts of the host and tourist gaze, and the *third space*, some tourism scholars have noted the importance of exploring how cultural backgrounds can

potentially influence different motivations and travel characteristics of backpackers (Maoz, 2007; Huang, 2008). In exploring the motivations of Israeli backpackers, Maoz (2006) found that their behaviours often included “provocative actions, open sexual contacts, and a tendency to disregard the locals’ requests and to treat them as servants” (p. 136); whereas a study exploring the differences between Asian and western backpackers in Taiwan found that there is a vast difference in how these travelers make decisions and how they interact with other travelers and the local populations (Huang, 2008). Huang (2008) asserted that Western backpackers were more concerned with personal growth and meeting others, while Asian backpackers “lay between collectivism and individualism, with their choices bounded by cultural pressures” (Huang, 2008, p. 179).

As the literature in this area suggests, there needs to be a distinction among these travelers in order to adequately understand the sector (Maoz, 2007; Huang, 2008; Reichel et al., 2009; Noy, 2004). As Huang (2008) states “the more independent and knowledge-seeking style of backpacker still exists, but as part of a spectrum of backpacker tourism patterns which are more differentiated than previously, due to the increasing diversity of cultural groups and nationalities participating in the sector” (p. 179-80). Thus, as this form of travel continues to evolve, it is of increasing importance to acknowledge the cultural backgrounds that not only influence the ways in which backpackers make travel decisions, but also the ways in which they interact with the host populations.

Thus far, this review has revealed a number of conceptual and empirical gaps in tourism literature related to the understanding of cultural vulnerabilities in Arctic tourism contexts; the ways in which these vulnerabilities may be shaped through the host-tourist relationship; and lastly, the social and relational implications of backpacking as a specific form of travel. These

three overarching bodies of literature that have been broadly discussed, have set the stage to both inform, and provide context for the discussion of three remaining bodies of literature more closely related to this specific study. The following sections will narrow the scope to provide a clearer context and further illuminate the relevancy of this study. First, linking previously discussed discourse on Arctic tourism and associated vulnerabilities, Iceland as a tourism destination will be discussed to provide a specific context for this research. Following this, informed by relevant notions of the host-tourist relationship and backpacking literature, discourses on kindness and *third space* will be discussed to explore the relevancy of examining host-tourist encounters of kindness as a symbolic *third space* in Icelandic tourism contexts.

2.4 Iceland as an Arctic Tourism Destination

The unique and complex environments, distinctive cultures, and subsequent challenges that provide a context for Arctic tourism are certainly exemplified in Iceland, as it continues to grow and develop as one of the world's most popular Arctic travel destinations. This relatively small European island is well-known worldwide for its unique, rugged, and volcanic landscape, glaciated mountains, vast and wild highlands, and pristine rivers, lakes, and waterfalls (Johanesson et al., 2010; Karlsdottir, 2013; Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2011). Compared to other European and Nordic countries, Iceland is known for its relatively late development and modernization, and also as an island nation that is highly dependent on agriculture and fishery industries (Johanesson et al., 2010; Baum, 1999; Baldacchino, 2006a). Iceland is characterized by its small population, currently recorded as 329,100 (Statistics Iceland, 2015), with most of the population located near the coast, and approximately sixty percent living in and around Reykjavik, the country's capital and largest city (Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2011). The documented history of Iceland is shorter compared to other Nordic regions, with the country

originally inhabited by those of Norse descent, and only becoming an independent democratic society in 1944 (Johannesson et al., 2010). Being relatively late to develop, Iceland has consistently struggled economically, often noted as one of the poorest European countries, with generally poor living standards and lower life expectancy (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010). Most recently in 2008, Iceland experienced a devastating economic crisis that pulled the country into severe debt, which has ultimately led to a significant push in the development and marketing of Iceland as an international tourism destination, to aid in bringing the country out of debt (Baum, 1997; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010; Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2011).

Although there is a long history of travel and exploration in Iceland, tourism has only recently been presented as a viable option for economic development (Johannesson et al., 2010; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010). Even with the creation of the national tourist board in 1964, tourism development in Iceland was not a main concern until the first tourism policy was created in 1996, which was when issues of tourism planning, sustainability, marketing, and research were first acknowledged (Johannesson et al., 2010). According to Johannesson, Huijbens, and Sharpley (2010), the Icelandic Tourist Board “has since functioned as a channel for state support of tourism, mainly in the form of marketing and promotion of Iceland as a tourist destination, and in sponsoring infrastructure development” (p. 284). Since the government’s push for tourism, the industry has expanded drastically, becoming the second largest sector following fisheries, with an 8.3% increase in visitors annually, and reaching just above one million visitors in 2015 (Ferdamalastofa, 2009; Ferdamalastofa, 2016). According to Johannesson and Huijbens (2010), “compared with the global growth, tourism in Iceland expanded more rapidly in recent years to become one of the central sectors of the national economy” (p. 419). Based upon the

recorded visitor trends over the past decade, tourist arrivals are projected to greatly surpass one million by 2017 (Johannesson et al., 2010; Ferdamalastofa, 2016).

2.4.1 Iceland as a Cold-Water Island Destination

Aside from its natural beauty and unique climate, it is important to acknowledge Iceland's classification as a small and isolated island nation, and to discuss some of the related challenges associated with cold-water island tourism (Johannesson et al., 2010; Karlsdottir, 2013; Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2011; Baldacchino, 2006a). Regardless of the size or type of island, tourism development in island destinations is often used as a means of economic diversification, and a viable alternative to traditional agricultural, fishing, and industrial exports (Lim & Cooper, 2009; Hamzah & Hampton, 2013). While many islands have embraced tourism as a main economic tool, the rapid development that has occurred in some island destinations has ultimately resulted in island tourism being synonymous with mass tourism, both among tourist perceptions (see Harrison, 2001; Graci, 2013), and in much of the discourse discussing island tourism (Baum, 1997; Baum, 1999; Kokkranikal, et al., 2003; McElroy, 2003; Sharpley, 2012). As Sharpley (2012) states, "many of the factors that contribute to the (assumed) touristic allure of islands, are considered to represent at the same time, challenges to the long-term success of their tourism sector" (p. 167-168). Because of the isolation and peripherality that characterizes islands, there has been a large focus on the political and economic insularity and instability that islands often experience (Weaver, 1998; Carlsen & Butler, 2011; Lim & Cooper, 2009). Many island destinations have limited resources, a narrow economic base aside from tourism, are often isolated from major international markets (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008a), and although tourism is a main source of income for many island economies, some destinations presently rely on foreign investment and external domination of tourist agencies, hotels, and airlines (Lim &

cooper, 2009; Sharpley, 2003). Because of such vulnerabilities, these destinations are generally regarded in the tourism literature as sensitive to external shocks, such as natural disasters, seasonality, political instability, and socio-cultural impacts resulting from tourism (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008a, Carlsen & Butler, 2011).

While a significant amount of the island tourism discourse focuses on warm water islands and subsequent development and management implications, there is a growing body of literature examining the distinct characteristics of cold-water island tourism destinations. Johannesson, Huijbens, and Sharpley (2010) note the general trend in island tourism literature to be reactive, focusing on the challenges of declining island destinations, as well as a focus on destinations associated with sun, sand, and sea tourism. While tourism on cold water islands has long existed, it has only been recently typified as a form of tourism focusing on both adventure and natural and cultural attractions (Johannesson et al., 2010; Baldacchino, 2006a; Baldacchino, 2006b). As cold-water island tourism is becoming more widely adopted as a developmental strategy in places like Iceland, tourism literature has started to compare and contrast various characteristics of these destinations to warm-water islands, noting the need for specific research that explores the functioning of tourism in specific cold-water island locations. Commonly cited shared characteristics include accessibility, limited resources, and often-limited economic dependence (Johannesson et al., 2010; Baldacchino, 2006a; Baldacchino, 2006b). However, in outlining the need for further research in this area, Johannesson, Huijbens and Sharpley (2010) assert that cold-water island tourism has specific challenges that may differ, “for example, matching limited demand to supply based upon fragile or extreme natural environments, distinctive patterns of seasonality, and the socio-cultural consequences of developing tourism within small, isolated and often strongly self-reliant communities” (p. 280-281). Similarly, another challenge specifically

faced by cold-water islands is what Baldacchino (2006b) refers to as a “‘double punch’ of *cost* and *distance*” (p, 190). The difficult access to cold-water islands, combined with lack of economies of scale and high import costs can in turn affect tourist motivations to travel to these regions, and provide management challenges for those involved in tourism development in these unique destinations (Baldacchino, 2006b; Johannesson et al., 2010).

2.4.1 Tourism Trends in Iceland

Iceland’s tourism industry is currently characterized by a small number of large, nationally owned tourism businesses, as well as many small family-run businesses and local entrepreneurial activities (Johannesson et al., 2010; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010). In looking at tourism involvement on a national scale, Iceland is made up of seventy-eight municipalities throughout its eight regions, each with an active governing body for tourism development (Johannesson et al., 2010). However, while these tourism agencies are dispersed evenly throughout the country, the most popular natural and cultural tourist attractions in Iceland are largely concentrated in the southwest, this area also termed “the golden circle” (Johannesson et al., 2010, p. 298). In an assessment of the opportunities and challenges faced by the Icelandic tourism industry, Johannesson, Huijbens and Sharpley (2010) found that “the activities of various entrepreneurs were the principal driving force behind the emergence of Iceland as a tourist destination” (p. 289), and as a result, there exist very few barriers to entry for local tourism business development.

Due to its location, Iceland is easily accessible from Europe, with the majority of visitors coming from Sweden, Finland, Germany, France, and The United Kingdom, closely followed by visitors from the United States and Canada (Ferdamalastofa, 2013). Because it is a relatively isolated island, the Icelandic tourism industry is highly dependent on air transport, and has three

locally owned international airlines based out of the Keflavik International Airport (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010). Additionally, in terms of alternative transport, Iceland has become a prominent stop in many cruise line itineraries, with eleven ports situated throughout the country (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011b; Hall & Saarinen, 2010). In evaluating social and ecological changes and trends within the Icelandic tourism industry, Fay and Karlsdottir (2011b) found that cruise travel was becoming of increasing importance for the industry, and that “disembarkments have grown significantly in North Iceland, reflective of a general trend towards increase interest in the North” (p. 72). Because of this widespread interest in travel to Iceland combined with improved sea accessibility “and diversification into new and colder environments” (Johannesson et al., 2010, p. 289), cruise ship passenger numbers as a visitor segment are also projected to increase annually (Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Johannesson et al., 2010; Ferdamalastofa, 2015).

Another factor that characterizes the current situation of the Icelandic tourism industry is the high seasonality of tourist arrivals in the spring and summer months. Due to the pleasant weather and warmest temperatures, June, July and August are the months that receive the largest influx of visitors (see table 2) (Ferdamalastofa, 2014; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). In addition to the warmer weather, the summer season also attracts visitors to witness the “midnight sun” and the continuous daylight that Iceland experiences throughout June and July (Hall & Saarinen, 2010).

Table 2
Tourist arrivals by season (Ferdamalastofa, 2014)

	2011		2012		2013	
	No.	%	No.	&	No.	%
Spring	69,545	12.9	82,902	12.8	99,413	12.7
Summer	265,204	49.0	301,725	46.6	345,212	44.2
Autumn	90,412	16.7	109,666	17.0	126,115	16.1
Winter	115,663	21.3	152,628	23.5	210,276	26.9
Total	540,824	100	646,921	100	781,016	100

Although visitor numbers continue to rise, Hall and Saarinen (2010) also note the increased efforts of the Icelandic tourism industry towards promoting and developing the winter tourism industry to attract a steady number of visitors year-round.

In light of Iceland's significant increase in tourist arrivals over the last decade, a number of tourism researchers have looked to explore the shifts in interests and motivation for travel to Iceland (Benediktsson et al., 2011; Bird & Gísladóttir, 2012; Huijbens & Benediktsson, 2013; Saeporsdóttir, 2010). Also contributing to literature surrounding natural disasters and their ability to deter tourist arrivals or inspire visitation, Benediktson, Lund, and Huijbens (2011) explored the impacts of the Icelandic volcanic eruption in March 2010 on tourist arrivals following this event. Through a survey of tourists in June 2010, the researchers found that the eruptions did not deter tourists from visiting, but it in turn added depth to visitors' experiences, allowing them to say they had been so close to a recently-erupted volcano (Benediktson, et al., 2011). In addition to determining travel patterns, impacts on motivations, and assessing seasonality of Icelandic tourism, tourism literature within the context of Iceland has also examined domestic travel patterns in the form of second home tourism, determining that factors influencing destination choice for second homes include rural communities and towns located within a short distance from large cities (Nouza, et al., 2013). Relatedly, another area of significance within Icelandic tourism literature is in regard to wellness tourism (Huijbens, 2011; Huijbens, 2013; Hjlager & Flagestad, 2012), and the growing popularity of this form of tourism within Nordic contexts. Huijbens (2011) found that while wellness tourism is not as significant in Iceland as it is in other Nordic environments, there exists a potential market to attract to Iceland's abundance of hot springs and therapeutic landscapes. Attracting these markets would add diversity and depth to Iceland's already popular nature tourism product.

2.4.2 Nature-Based Tourism

The predominant attraction and most important segment of Iceland's tourism industry, drawing in the most international visitors, is the country's natural environment (Saeporsdottir, 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). The Icelandic landscape undeniably acts as the foundation for the tourism industry, with the majority of tourist attractions featuring natural attractions such as hot springs, waterfalls, geysers, volcanoes, and glaciers (Saeporsdottir, 2010). Multiple studies looking at visitor motivations assert that natural and cultural attractions are a significant motivation for visiting Iceland, as many of the natural attractions and Icelandic landscapes differ vastly from their home countries (Johannesson et al., 2010; Saeporsdottir, 2010; Olafsdottir, 2013). Through a survey of tourists in 2014, the Icelandic Tourist Board found that for international tourists, nature was the most significant factor in influencing the decision to travel to Iceland, more important than culture, history, and price or exchange rate (Ferdamalastofa, 2014). For those tourists that had listed nature as a key factor, the survey also asked what specifically about Iceland's nature had attracted them to Iceland, and the majority responded with beautiful/untouched landscape, followed by scenery/wilderness, and uniqueness/diversity as significant factors (Ferdamalastofa, 2014). Because of the importance of Iceland's natural beauty to incoming tourists, many of Iceland's marketing campaigns have focused specifically on the pristine and untouched image of Iceland, using slogans like "Iceland Naturally", "Nature the way nature made it", and "Pure, Natural, Unspoiled" (Saeporsdottir, 2010).

While Iceland boasts many natural attractions, most of them are very spatially concentrated (See figure 3), ultimately resulting in ecological and social planning challenges due to visitor crowding (Johannesson et al., 2010). In evaluating nature tourism planning based on tourist attitudes, Saeporsdottir (2010) asserts that Iceland's natural attractions used for tourism

are “not evenly distributed around the country, and destinations in south Iceland (e.g. the hot spring area at Geysir) and northeast (e.g. Myvatn) are the most visited, but other areas like the Western fjords and the northwest are less visited” (p. 29). This issue of attraction concentration has also raised questions in the associated literature examining nature-based tourism, as the increased and concentrated visitation is starting to affect the serene and beauty that ultimately draws visitors to Iceland (Olafsdottir, 2013; Saeporsdottir, 2010).

Figure 3. Map of Iceland, showing popular natural attractions. (Lonely Planet, 2015)



Relatedly, much of the published literature on Icelandic tourism focuses on this complex and vulnerable nature-based tourism sector, and the related issues that are central to the constant growth of tourist numbers into wilderness areas. A major issue discussed in the literature is related to Iceland’s central highlands, and the development of tourism and its subsequent impacts on this specific environment (Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2011; Karlsdottir, 2013; Lund, 2013; Saeporsdottir et al., 2011; Olafsdottir & Runnstrom, 2013). In an attempt to analyze and map out the impacts of tourism the highland wilderness, Olafsdottir & Runnstrom (2011) found that there

were considerable impacts on the vulnerable environments of the interior highlands as a result of tourism, emphasizing the need for increased management of tourism in these areas.

Alternatively, Karlsdottir (2013) examined the attitudes of nature-based tourists in the highlands, concluding that tourism in these areas can ultimately have a positive impact to fight for the protection of nature, but only if tourism in these areas is based upon environmental awareness and protection.

2.4.3 Social Implications of Icelandic Tourism

While much of the literature surrounding Icelandic tourism has focused on environmental vulnerability as a result of tourism, there is less that examines the social implications that tourism has on the local population. In a study examining resident attitudes of tourism development, Fay and Karlsdottir (2011) note that while many of the Icelandic people have positive feelings towards the economic potential of tourism in Iceland, there is also some disapproval. The researchers state that “the public debate on tourism’s effect on society is related to the intensity of visits to protected areas and the propensity of travel operators to diffuse the crowd around the country” (p. 72). The large concentration of visitors at a small number of attractions throughout the country, not only puts pressure on the fragile Arctic environments where these attractions take place, but also on the people who live in and around these crowded regions (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010; Kajan, 2014). With no measures for visitor carrying capacities, local frustrations have also been noted in regard to tourist congestion and traffic in areas on the country’s highly popular bus routes, as well as near the easily accessible cruise ports that attract large numbers of day visitors (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011). Currently, the annual visitor numbers are more than double of the current population of Iceland (998,400 tourists in 2014), and as these numbers are

projected to rise, so too are the social implications and tensions as a result of increased development (Ferdamalastofa, 2015; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Kajan, 2014).

While resident perceptions in regard to tourism development in Iceland have not been adequately explored, some studies have examined the ways in which local communities are involved in tourism, and how they work together to effectively adapt to and manage local tourism initiatives (Einarsson, 2009; Bird & Gisladdottir, 2012; Johannesson et al., 2003). In Johannesson, Skaptadottir, and Benediktsson's (2003) study of a local Icelandic community and its shift from a resource-based industry, they acknowledged the importance of tourism development on intra-community bridging and bonding, and found that community engagement in tourism allowed for the increased development of informal networks and social capital on a municipal level. Comparatively, Einarsson's (2009) study explored the opposing socio-economic views within a small fishing community and its transformation into a whale-watching destination. He found that although there were initial conflicting views regarding the change from traditional consumptive values of whales, to using them for a non-consumptive tourist initiative, this change ultimately had positive impacts on the community's culture and adaptive capacities.

Although there is some literature that seeks to understand the complexity of Iceland as a tourism destination, this topic is still in its infancy. There exists a need for further exploration of Iceland as a tourism destination, as well as further exploration of the various forms of vulnerability that might be present, and ways in which to address and/or alleviate such vulnerabilities. While this section has acknowledged some of the gaps in the literature related to tourism in Iceland, the next section will narrow the scope to provide further context for this study through exploring relevant discourse on kindness and *third space*.

2.5 Kindness

In the most general sense, “kindness entails enacting kind behavior toward other people” (Otake et al., 2006, p. 362). While kindness has not been thoroughly studied or adequately defined in the social sciences, some scholars have referred to it as a human or character strength in which we all possess that can specifically contribute to one’s overall happiness (Otake et al., 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Some scholars have specifically studied what is referred to as *random* acts of kindness, which can be defined as “something one does for an unknown other that they hope will benefit that individual” (Baskerville et al., 2000, p. 294). In this sense, acts of kindness could include: “paying a toll for the next driver, putting money in a parking meter for someone one does not know after the meter expires, or giving a stranger a flower.” (Baskerville et al., 2000, p. 294). A few researchers have studied kindness alongside gratitude, which is defined as receiving kindness from other people, and is considered “an important human strength that contributes to subjective happiness” (Otake et al., 2006, p. 362). In this sense, researchers have found that both kindness and gratitude can contribute to one’s subjective well-being, and similar to studies looking at gratitude (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; McCullough et al., 2002), there tends to also be a link between people’s experiences of kindness and their overall happiness (Otake et al., 2006).

Because of their ability to affect subjective well-being and happiness, kindness and gratitude have become a focus of research within the field of positive psychology, which ultimately aims to emphasize aspects of the human experience that lead to happiness and fulfillment, through “the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). Linley and Joseph, (2004) note that this form of psychology has

successfully been able to “consolidate, lift up, and celebrate what we *do* know about what makes life worth living, as well as carefully define the areas where we need to do more” (p. 4).

Research in positive psychology tends to focus on countering traditional studies of psychology that have dominantly emphasized the negative aspects of studied phenomena, and to “redress what is perceived as an imbalance in the focus of research attention and practice” (Linley, et al., 2006, p. 6). To redress these aspects incorporates viewing positive psychology as “a different lens through which to understand human experience” (Linley, et al., 2006, p. 6). Research using the lens of positive psychology has included topics such as wisdom, spirituality and creativity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), as well as forgiveness, gratitude, community, work ethic, altruism, and kindness (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001). In relation to the positive focus of this discourse, Gable and Haidt (2005) argue that

“positive psychology’s aim is not the denial of the distressing, unpleasant, or negative aspects of life, nor is it an effort to see them through rose-colored glasses. Those who study topics in positive psychology fully acknowledge the existence of human suffering, selfishness, dysfunctional family systems, and ineffective institutions. But the aim of positive psychology is to study the other side of the coin—the ways that people feel joy, show altruism, and create healthy families and institutions—thereby addressing the full spectrum of human experience” (p. 105).

Overall, this form of psychology makes the argument for the positive topics of research, like kindness to be understood on their own, and not as a response to any problems or difficulties (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Pearce, 2009).

Although kindness has been explored to some extent alongside other human characteristics within positive psychology (Otake et al., 2006, Baskerville et al., 2000), there is a dearth of research looking specifically at acts of kindness and how they might be able to bridge cultural differences, or even act as a foundation for the formation of social relationships. While some researchers view kindness as adaptive, with the ability to contribute positively to such

relationships, (Otake et al., 2006), it has also been noted that when it comes to kindness, “people are expected (and perhaps even biologically programmed) to give more to those with whom they share close relationships than to those who are more distant” (Excline et al., 2012, p. 46). In looking at the notion of acting kind towards those who are more distant, there exists a need to understand why people are compelled to exhibit generosity for strangers, and what the outcomes of these interactions might lead to (Baskerville et al., 2000). Additionally, understanding how kindness contributes to social relations and relationship development can have direct implications for the aforementioned host-tourist relationships and negative associations or gazes often observed in tourism contexts.

In the context of tourism research, Glover and Filep (2015) recently noted the need for “a more concerted social science research agenda on the kindness of strangers and gratitude in tourism contexts” suggesting specific links to the field of positive psychology and the concept of social capital as standpoints from which to view and study kindness in tourism. While humanistic psychology theories have long been a way of thinking regarding tourism, scholars have recently started to make significant connections between positive psychology and tourism (Pearce, 2009; Filep, 2012; Glover & Filep, 2015). Pearce (2009) argues that exploring tourism through a lens of positive psychology has the potential to shape how tourist behaviour is studied; and although happiness, well-being, and fulfilment are central to positive psychology (Filep, 2012; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), these concepts are also central to the purpose outcomes of tourism.

Directly related to tenets of positive psychology, social capital ultimately represents the positive outcomes resulting from social interaction and engagement. With roots in sociology and political science, social capital is commonly described by researchers as the resources that are

available to people as a result of social exchange (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Putnam, 1995; Van Ingen & Van Eijck, 2009). Bourdieu (1986) explains this network of relationships and subsequent resources as “the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (p. 22). Thus, a defining principle is the idea that social interactions, relations, or networks can be a form in gaining access to resources or advantages that would otherwise be unavailable (Glover et al., 2007; Bourdieu, 1986). Stemming from the exploration of social capital within a leisure context (see Glover et al., 2007; Glover, 2004; Glover & Hemmingway, 2005; Warde et al., 2005), scholars have begun to focus on the development of social capital and related concepts within a tourism context (Glover & Filep, 2015). Although this topic has been broached within the realm of tourism by some researchers, it narrowly covers the vast expanse of tourism and its forms, practices, and involved stakeholders. While relationship durability is a defining principle of social capital, there remains a question regarding the potential for tourism to foster more temporary forms of social capital through the brief encounters that occur within a tourism context (Glover & Filep, 2015; Bauman, 2001). Specifically, Glover and Filep (2015) posit that brief encounters in tourism may still have the potential to foster social capital, and that future research in this area could explore acts of kindness, generosity and gratitude that occur in tourism activities (Glover & Filep, 2015).

2.5.1 Responsibility and Care

Related to the concepts of interaction, kindness, and engagement, also guiding the focus and content of this study are the socially embedded concepts of care and responsibility. Initially from a feminist perspective, care was looked at as a private matter, and as something that occurs through proximity and personal relationships, on the assumption that “we care first for, and have

responsibilities towards, those nearest in” (Massey, 2005, p. 9). The ethics of care is rooted in feminism thought, and views caring as an ongoing responsibility or commitment, in which we constantly expend energy on and take responsibility for what it is that we are caring for (Paulsen, 2011). Lawson (2007) states that an ethics of care should incorporate recognizing the needs of others, taking responsibility for meeting needs for care, providing care competently, and being responsive to ongoing needs of receivers of care. In this sense, caring ultimately means to understand and to respond to “others’ needs and expectations, strengths and inhibitions, as well as the context of [the] situation” (Paulsen, 2011, p. 29).

Because of the original assumption that caring only occurs within personal proximity, geography scholars argue that care and responsibility have become marginalized in society (Massey, 2005; Lawson, 2007; Silk, 1998). Lawson (2007) considers the marginalization of caring to be politically rooted, and although care is a central aspect of everyday life, the marginalizing of care “furthers the myth that our successes are achieved as autonomous individuals” (p. 5). The concept of geographies of responsibility stems from this notion of marginalization of care, and encompasses the idea of caring in a more “humanitarian fashion, to more anonymous others in distant locations” (Barnett & Land, 2007, p. 1067). Silk (2004) acknowledges that caring and being responsible for those outside of one’s immediate proximity or culture is to “extend the geographical, psychological and political scope of a universal human activity” (p. 229). This fosters the idea of bridging cultural difference to extend care to “the other,” rather than caring solely for those we have a personal connection with (Barnett, & Land, 2007; Sin, 2010).

Within tourism discourse, the concept of responsibility has been discussed at length in the context of responsible nature-based or community-based tourism initiatives (Grimwood &

Doubleday, 2013b; Sin, 2014; Sin & Minca, 2014), and as a possible motivation for volunteer tourism (Sin, 2009; Sin, 2010; Coghlan & Fennell, 2009). While the central concept of responsible tourism is to limit the environmental and social impacts of tourism activities through carefully planned initiatives or volunteer opportunities, there has been some critique regarding the notion of responsibility in this context (Sin, 2014; Sin & Minca, 2014; Coghlan & Fennell, 2009). In exploring motivations for volunteer tourism, Coghlan and Fennell (2009) argue that instead of the assumed altruistic motivations that appear to motivate volunteer tourists, “that volunteer tourism represents a form of social egoism, engaging participants to help others through instrumental means but for the purpose of achieving the ultimate goal of benefiting oneself” (p. 393). Alternatively, through a study of a community-based elephant tourism initiative in Thailand, Sin and Minca (2014) found that “responsibilities here are thus seen to be those of the ‘privileged’ towards ‘others’, and the overwhelming imperative to be responsible related to the great advantages accorded to the developed world” (p. 98). These examples ultimately question the notion of responsibility as it relates to tourism, also providing a context in which to explore alternative situations – where responsibility in a tourism context might be focused towards the tourist, rather than towards the host.

Additionally, kindness, care, and responsibility in tourism have also been discussed in the context of hospitality in tourism (Lashley, 2008; Lashley et al., 2004; Ariffin & Magzhi, 2012). Scholars in this area posit that hospitality ultimately aims to achieve guest satisfaction and happiness, so aspects of kindness and care are inherent among those involved in the hospitality industry (Ariffin & Magzhi, 2012). Some studies have also looked to examine how tourists demonstrate kindness in a hospitality setting, the main topic of focus being through tipping (Shamir, 1984; Lynn & McCall, 2000). Other researchers debate the inherent kindness involved

in hospitality, noting that it is difficult for those who work in hospitality to separate the philosophical and functional aspects of their roles (Poulston, 2015; Causvic & Lynch, 2009). Poulston (2015) states that the transactional nature in tourism and hospitality “pervades what is essentially a moral duty” (p. 145). On the other hand, some researchers feel similarly regarding the kindness of tourists, being that tourists often feel obligated and responsible to demonstrate their kindness and/or gratitude through tipping (Lynn & Graves, 1996). Because kindness is often so closely associated with hospitality, Glover and Filep (2015) note the need to expand our understandings of kindness in both hospitality and in other tourism contexts. They suggest exploring “the role of kindness in the context of the tourists’ need for social interaction, and hosts’ desire to be hospitable toward strangers” (p. 161). Thus, exploring encounters of kindness between hosts and tourists and how they relate to the host-tourist relationship and notions of vulnerability represents a relevant area of research.

2.5.2 The Sharing Economy

Outside of hospitality, notions of care and kindness have also been encapsulated in what researchers and tourism industry stakeholders refer to as “the sharing economy” (Schor, 2014; Forno & Garibaldi, 2015; Molz, 2013; Slee, 2015; Schor & Fitzmaurice, 2015). Similar to the backpacking movement as a specific form of travel outside of traditional mass tourism, this concept was introduced as an alternative way of traveling that involves lowering costs and collaborative consumption (Schor, 2014; Forno & Garibaldi, 2015). Researchers describe the sharing economy movement as a collaborative, peer-to-peer form of travel (Forno & Garibaldi, 2015). Molz (2013) states that the sharing economy “captures a variety of online enterprises that mobilize new technologies in the spirit of lending, borrowing, gifting, swapping, bartering or renting consumer goods” (p. 215). In a tourism context, this includes websites like Couchsurfing,

airBnb, and House Swap, and Uber, that enable members to share and/or swap their assets. Slee (2015) states that through these exchanges “we help to build our community. Instead of being passive and materialistic consumers; we help to create a new area of openness, in which we can find a welcome and a helping hand wherever we go” (p. 10). According to Schor (2014), sharing economy activities can be separated into categories that include the recirculation of goods, increased utilization of durable assets, exchange of services, and the sharing of productive assets. Schor also notes that these networks can exist both online and offline, and activities can be either for profit, or not for profit (2014).

In describing the shift towards a sharing economy in tourism, Forno and Garibaldi (2015) note that travelers are increasingly looking for better value for their money. They state: “no longer merely interested in destinations, current tourists long for unique life experiences, for a first-hand approach to new cultures and unfamiliar lifestyles” (p. 203). Relatedly, this idea of a first-hand approach to new cultures in tourism is encapsulated within the not-for-profit network of CouchSurfing. The CouchSurfing network has been referred to in tourism research as part of the sharing economy, but also referenced as being part a moral economy, or experience economy (Molz, 2013; Belk, 2014; Ronzhyn, 2014). The main goal of this not-for-profit organization is to provide a network for people to provide free accommodation to travelers by offering a couch or room for a pre-arranged amount of time. Couchsurfing differs from other networks involved in the sharing economy, as it discourages any monetary payment. Additionally, one of the main tenets of this network is that they encourage their members to engage in kindness (CouchSurfing, 2015).

Some researchers exploring sharing economy networks, as well as more informal sharing encounters like hitchhiking, have examined the potential for relationship building to occur as a

result of participation in such activities and exchanges (Schor, 2014; Molz, 2013; Wu et al., 2016). Schor (2014) noted that stakeholders involved in sharing economy networks have made a commitment to social transformation through the development of sharing platforms, and that participation in these exchanges can ultimately lead to the development of social capital. In examining consumer decisions relative to sharing economy platforms, Wu, Ma, and Zeng (2016) noted that trust is a key determinant in people's participation in tourism activities such as Couchsurfing and airBnB. In a call for further research examining the social and relational impacts of the sharing economy, Schor (2014) questions whether or not sharing economy platforms can ultimately work to build relationships, friendships, networks, and social trust among members. This also provides a context in which to explore kindness and its potential relevancy or prominence within the social networks and practices of the sharing economy.

2.6 Third Space

A concept related to prior discussions on the host-tourist relationship, and relevant to assumptions of positive psychology and social capital, is the concept of the *third space*. This way of thinking originated from Bhabha's (1994) *The Location of Culture*, where he describes *third space* as a stairwell or corridor that bridges cultural differences, or "the passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (p. 5). In this sense, the *third space* is a shared space of balance or hybridity existing between cultures, but is often ignored or unclear when we are caught up in the arbitrary and socially or historically constructed differences that can often exist in today's society.

In a tourism context, this shared space is also described by Hunter (2001) as a space for social engagement between cultures, to ultimately form a hybrid culture of trust and

understanding between culturally different hosts and tourists (Bhabha, 1994; Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004). Although there is characteristically a negative connotation brought to the concept of host-tourist relationships, an increasing number of scholars looking at cultural hybridity and the potential for positive outcomes within tourism encounters (Bhabha, 1994; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004; Hunter, 2001; Wearing and Wearing 2006; Amoamo, 2007; Amoamo, 2011), demonstrate that “there *can* be mutual learning between cultures, and such learning takes place in the context of the shared space of those cultures” (Hunter, 2001, p. 59). This concept has been expanded on within the host-tourist dichotomy to represent the possibility of a space in tourism where traditional hegemonic relations are ignored, to create a “fluid process of co-presence and co-construction between tourist and host” (Wearing & Wearing, 2006, p. 147). Where *othering*, can be a limiting factor in the tourist-host relationship, the idea of the *third space* framework suggests embracing cultural difference, putting aside notions of superiority or inferiority, and allowing for changes and reconstruction of identity (Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006).

Wearing and Wearing (2006), and Hunter (2001) posit that this space can exist simply through social interaction and engagement between host and tourist, acting as “plural spaces for individuals to challenge the way culturally specific discourses construct social, personal and cultural identity” (Wearing and Wearing, 2006, p. 161). Similarly, Table 3 further describes how the *third space* can address issues of power, values, and differing perspectives between the host culture and the tourist (labelled western society) (Wearing and Wearing, 2006). Together, the host and tourist cultures become hybrid through the sharing and understanding of values and practices. In this illustration of the *third space*, the place becomes a space for tourists to learn and interact, and a place for hosts to educate, interpret, and interact. Although this concept may

be seen as idealistic and not plausible in all tourism situations (Wearing & Wearing, 2006), it does offer the possibility of being able to broach some of the vulnerabilities experienced in tourism through specific and intentional encounters.

Table 3
Interactive third space (Wearing & Wearing, 2006, p. 160).

	Western Society	Host Society
Power	Economic and cultural exchange (more equitable distribution of power)	Economic and cultural exchange (more equitable distribution of power)
Culture	Hybridization	Hybridization
Values	Quality of life – exploring new boundaries	Survival with increased standard of living, retaining cultural values
Place/Space	Tourist destination a space to learn and interact	Spaces imbued with traditional social value but open to dynamic interaction
People	Tourists as choristers (looking for interaction and learning about others)	Hosts as educators and interpreters
Selves “I”, “me”	Hybridized and fluid; Incorporating new aspects from “other” cultures’ “I,” “you,” and “we”	Hybridized and fluid; Incorporating new aspects from “other” cultures’ “I,” “you,” and “we”

Also inherent in the *third space* framework in reference to tourism, is that “society as a culture can no longer afford to take from each other, to make every encounter an opportunity for exploitation” (Hunter, 2001, p. 64), thus there needs to be an act of role-taking to ultimately bridge the gap between the self and the other (Hunter, 2001; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Mead, 1972). Aligning with Mead (1972), Bhabha (1994) uses a metaphor for the *third space*, describing it as “stairwell”, which then “becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between the upper and lower, black and white (p. 5). Thus, if tourists and hosts are to isolate their institutionalized or historicized perspectives and take on the perspective of the other, they can foster a relationship or encounter that recognizes or

embodies an intercultural context (Hunter, 2001). Additionally, Hunter (2001) notes that the notion of othering and the underlying friction of the host-tourist relationship discussed above is based upon “and surrounded by a basic lack of trust” (p. 42). Trust in this sense means fully engaging with the different culture, all assumptions and expectations set aside. This notion of trust in the tourist-host encounter challenges and critiques previously discussed notions of negativity rooted in the tourist and host gazes (Urry, 1990; Urry, 1992; Maoz, 2006; MacCannell, 2011), suggesting the potential for positive tourist-host relationships that ultimately bridge the aforementioned cultural difference. Hunter (2001) states, “this trust then, is a reflective relationship of engagement over time, where feelings of reciprocity and reliability are cultivated” (p. 52). As discussed within the context of the tourist and host gazes and the notion of othering, unequal power relationships represent a significant threat to trust within tourism encounters; however, Hunter states that “regardless of the threat of power, trust can still exist between cultural interests when differential power relationships are recognized. To do so is a first step towards mutual understanding between culture” (2001, p. 53). Ultimately, fostering trust in tourism situations requires a combination of understanding, interpreting and seeing the situation through the eyes the other culture, in turn creating a space of balance between the two cultures (Hunter, 2001; Pettit, 1995; Blumer, 1969).

Where this concept represents an ideal solution to disconnect and vulnerabilities present within the host-tourist relationship, some tourism scholars note the need to further explore and prove *how* tourism can actually act as a *third space* to broach inherent cultural differences (Hollinshead, 1998; Wearing & Wearing, 2006). However, because a main tenant of the *third space* is the potential for trust and understanding through engagement between cultures, a way in which to explore the enactment of *third space* in tourism encounters is through encounters of

kindness between hosts and tourists. As previously stated, viewing host-tourist encounters in this way not only helps contribute to tourism literature looking at *third space*, but in an Arctic tourism context and Icelandic tourism context, looking at kindness between hosts and tourists can extend understanding into how certain vulnerabilities or aspects of *othering* might be alleviated.

2.7 Summary

In summary, this review has provided conceptual foundation for a further understanding of the significance of tourism in addressing Arctic vulnerabilities through *third space* encounters. This chapter provided an extensive overview of the key concepts discussed in the literature pertinent to the intended research project, including the complexity and structure of tourism activities in Arctic regions, the host-tourist relationship and associated gazes, and backpacking as a specific form of tourism that might foster cohesion between backpackers and hosts. To provide further context for this specific study, literature examining tourism in Iceland was also discussed, as well as discourses examining kindness and *third space*. This review addressed a number of gaps in the literature, specifically with respect to the need to explore cultural vulnerabilities resulting from tourism operations in Iceland, as well as the relevancy for using kindness to explore *third space* in the functioning of host-tourist relationships. The remaining chapters present the methodology and methods required to undertake the proposed research, followed by the research outcomes, discussion and conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

As identified through the review of relevant literature, there is a dearth of research that specifically aims to understand the complex nature of the host-tourist relationship and associated vulnerabilities, or the potential for *third space* encounters in tourism, and specifically within the context of Arctic tourism in Iceland. Similarly, there exists a need to understand these interactions from a more positive lens. Thus, the purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts. Emphasis was placed on understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships. The study was organized around four main research questions, which included: 1) what meanings do hosts and tourists ascribe to the intercultural encounters experienced in Icelandic tourism contexts? 2) what circumstances (spatial/temporal or social/environmental/cultural) enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships? 3) how do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of social or cultural vulnerability, and how do these acts intensify or alleviate feelings of care and responsibility towards others?; and 4) how might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships? The following chapter will first outline the study site and context, followed by the research approach, and specific methods used to achieve the outlined research goals.

3.1 Study Site and Context: Iceland

This study explores the complex relationships and encounters between hosts and tourists in an Arctic context. Iceland exemplifies a Northern region with an established Arctic tourism industry that has recently experienced a large growth in tourist arrivals over the past decade. Not

only does Iceland represent a country that thrives off of Arctic tourism, but it also presents a situation wherein annual tourist numbers are more than double that of the host population, making it a very relevant context to explore the host-tourist relationship and related vulnerabilities. While undertaking the fieldwork for this study in September, the annual visitor arrivals reached over 1 million tourists for 2015 (Ferdamalastofa, 2016).

With tourism being the second largest industry in Iceland and thus bringing forward conflicting opinions noted in the literature regarding development and tourist influxes (Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010; Kajan, 2014), it represented an extremely relevant context from which to explore this research project. To meet the outlined objectives for this study, I interviewed and observed backpackers and local hosts in the most visited locations and communities along Iceland's popular 'ring road' tourist trail during the end of the busy summer season in August and September, 2015.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach used for this study is guided ontologically and theoretically by interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, which together acted as a lens through which this research was carried out, to ultimately understand the interactions taking place in Icelandic tourism contexts. The following sections will provide an overview of how this study was guided epistemologically and theoretically, discussing ethnography as the methodology of choice, and specifically how symbolic interactionist ethnography influenced the process and design of the research methods.

3.2.1 Interpretivism and Symbolic Interactionism

To guide the research process for this study, I situated myself within an interpretivist paradigm, wherein focus is placed on the understanding of social reality (Crotty, 1998). In an

interpretivist paradigm, research often explores “the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live, and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments have impacted on constructed understandings” (Grbich, 2007, p. 6). Reality in this perspective is essentially socially embedded (Crotty, 1998; Grbich, 2007).

Embedded within interpretivism, the specific theoretical perspective used to guide my research is symbolic interactionism. Also rooted in pragmatist philosophy, symbolic interactionism is a perspective that “views human action as constructing self, situation and society” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 262). It operates under the assumption that social interaction is a fundamental component in the way in which we as humans create meaning and understand reality, with its overall purpose in research being “to understand” (Crotty, 1998; Charmaz, 2014). Blumer (1986) recognized the symbolic nature of social interaction, noting interaction as “a process that forms human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct” (p. 8). These notions were originally derived from pragmatism, which presents a practical and optimistic view of society that values the exploration of meaning and culture through experience, ultimately providing a strong foundation for the assumptions and ideas associated with symbolic interactionist theory (Crotty, 1998). Prus (1996) reflected on some of the main tenets of symbolic interactionist theory, noting that “notions of community, self, action, reflectivity, symbolic realities, human interchange, and collective behaviour are fundamental to symbolic interactionism, as are the process of conflict, cooperation and compromise” (p. 22). Specifically, through the seminal contributions of G.H Mead and Herbert Blumer, symbolic interactionism as a theoretical construct operates under the following assumptions:

“That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; that the meanings of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows’; and that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (Blumer, 1968 as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 72).

Related to this interpretive process of interaction, another significant assumption or tenet of symbolic interactionism is the notion of role-taking, or putting ourselves in the place of others (Crotty, 1998; Charmaz, 2014). In order to understand the perspective of someone else, “we imagine the role of another person from their perspective and construct our own roles in relation to it” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 271).

Thus, in wanting to observe and explore the social and cultural relationships and encounters within Arctic tourism, the notions of role-taking and meaning-making that are inherent to symbolic interactionism were central tenets in guiding the direction and methodological considerations of this research. Because interactionist research is not critical in nature, but solely looks to understand and interpret social interaction, using it as a theoretical approach ties well into the pragmatist views surrounding kindness, acting as a viable lens from which to view the intended research.

3.2.2 Ethnography

According to Crotty (1998), the researcher’s methodology signifies “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of our desired methods” (p. 3). In this respect, our methodology ultimately acts as a rationale for the kinds of methods we use, guiding us to develop and understand the processes we take to plan and carry out our research (Daly, 2007; Berbarry & Boles, 2014). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I used ethnography to explore and understand the encounters that occur between tourists and hosts in the context of Icelandic tourism.

Ethnography as a methodology aims to contextualize everyday cultural experiences within a specific context, culture, or subculture, and involves researcher participation and immersion in the culture to illuminate the day-to-day lives of those within that culture (Daly, 2007; Wolcott, 1999). Daly (2007) argues that the inner-workings of culture are hidden from plain sight, so through ethnography, culture can be illuminated by observing the “sights, sounds, and smells of everyday life fully, with the aim of generating a detailed portrait of the activities and practices of the culture being observed” (p. 86). Essentially the primary aim of ethnography is to understand how things work from the perspective of the participants in that cultural setting, and ethnography as a methodology represents “both a process and a product; the product then being enriched with “thick description” of observed themes, stories and patterns” (Daly, 2007, p. 87).

As a prevalent method used within tourism research, ethnography acts as viable means for exploring complex local and cultural processes within a particular context (Duijnhoven & Roessingh, 2006; Rantala, 2011). Rantala (2011) notes that there are many different uses for ethnographic research across disciplines, however, “all ethnographic studies share some common features, such as the presence of the researcher in the field, concentration on some socio-cultural setting, observation of the participants, and a thick description of the research subject” (p. 153). In tourism research, the main purpose of ethnography is no longer just to travel to a foreign place to provide a detailed description of the cultural processes, but instead, “specific social and cultural phenomena in distant as well as nearby settings lie at the basis of contemporary ethnographic research” (Duijnhoven & Roessingh, 2006, p. 117). To provide a rationale for choosing ethnography as a methodological approach, Wolcott (1999) states that “ethnography cannot proceed without purpose,” and that it must begin with broad, descriptive and orienting

questions that warrant ethnographic research as a means for finding the answer (p. 69). Thus, the research questions identified for this particular study focused on being able to understand and contextualize the specific encounters between hosts and tourists within Arctic tourism, and therefore warranted full immersion through ethnographic inquiry into the culture and contexts where these encounters took place.

Crotty (1998) asserted that “ethnographic inquiry in the spirit of symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of people’s overall worldview or ‘culture’” (p. 7). This notion is relevant to my specific research study, as I drew upon tenets of symbolic interactionism to gain a fuller understanding of the encounters and interactions taking place between hosts and tourists. In discussing methodologies relevant and suitable under the theoretical assumptions of symbolic interactionism, Rock (2001) also noted that “what ethnography *can* contribute is a disciplined unravelling of the breadth and complexity of relations” (p. 31). In looking at this complexity of social relations, ethnography as a methodology inherently takes on some of the fundamental notions tied to symbolic interactionism, including role-taking. Crotty (1998) states that within ethnographic research “to enter into the attitudes of the community, we must be able to take the role of others – we have to see ourselves as social objects and we can only do that through adopting the standpoint of others” (p. 74). Additionally, instead of research looking explicitly at self-experiences *or* the experiences or cultures of another, “an ethnographer can allow both self and other to appear together within a single narrative that carries a multiplicity of dialoguing voices” (Tedlock, 2003, p. 191). Consequently, these overarching symbolic interactionist tenets of intersubjectivity,

reflexivity and role taking played an important role in influencing the focus and structure of my research methods, discussed in detail in the following sections.

3.2.4 Reflexive participation & Subjectivity

Because ethnographic research involves full immersion in the culture being examined, as well as the ability to see from the perspective of the research participants, the researcher ultimately plays an important role in the outcomes of the study. Within the context of this study, reflexivity was used to allow for transparency of “the values and beliefs we hold that almost certainly influence the research process and its outcome” (Etherington, 2007, p. 601). Reflexive research encourages self-input, “so that our work can be understood, not only in terms of what we have discovered, but how we have discovered it” (Etherington, 2007, p. 601). In this case, my previous travel experiences and encounters as both a host and a backpacker have definitely played a part in framing this study; although these have been personal and highly contextual experiences, they have certainly been influential in shaping the direction and overall focus of my research, and were continuously acknowledged as I moved throughout the research process. Tedlock (2003) states that “the ongoing nature of fieldwork connects important personal experiences with an area of knowledge; as a result, it is located between the interiority of autobiography and the exteriority of cultural analysis” (p. 165). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the subjective personal, cultural or theoretical constructs and experiences that connect myself as the researcher to the topic, as well as the situations and encounters that I have experienced during the process of research (pre, during, and post fieldwork), were used to guide the entire research process, including interpretation, analysis, and representation of the outcomes of this study (Wolcott, 1999; Creswell, 2013).

3.3 Research methods

Data collection for this ethnographic study took place over a six-week period at the end of Iceland's main tourist season in August and September. Research data was gathered through a variety of methods, including observer-as-participant, semi-structured interviews, and personal journaling. The following sections will discuss each of these methods in detail, outlining procedures used for sampling and recruitment, defining the research participants, and discussing procedures for establishing trustworthiness and crystallization throughout the research process, followed by a discussion of methodological and ethical considerations.

3.3.1 Participant Observation, Personal Journaling, and Photography

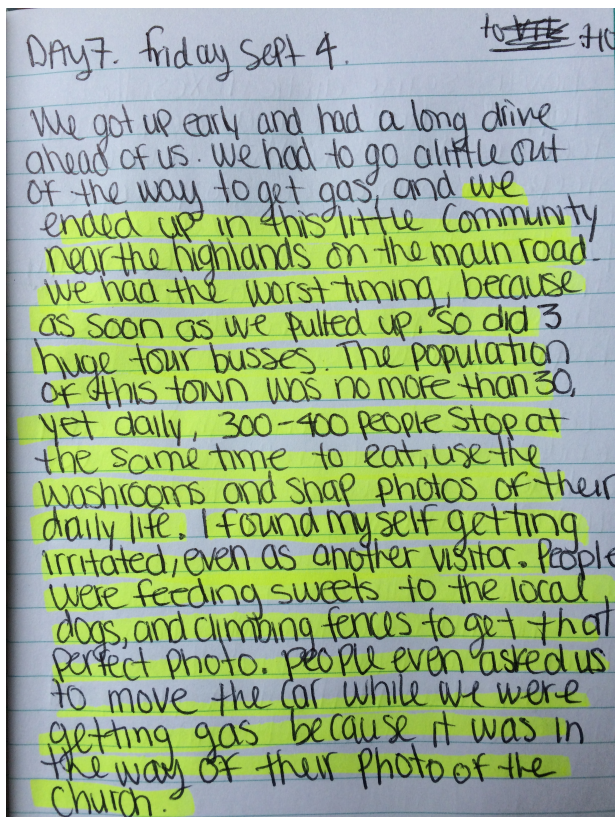
Throughout the research process, aligning with the reflexive nature of my study, I assumed the role of observer-as-participant to allow for an in-depth exploration of the complex nature of the host-tourist relationship. Assuming this role during fieldwork allowed me to record relevant details about the encounters and relationships taking place, while simultaneously allowing me to document and observe what I encountered throughout the process (Gold, 1958; Creswell, 2013). The following questions, or "observation protocol" as defined by Creswell (2013), helped me to define the scope of my observations:

- 1) How are hosts and tourists engaging?
- 2) What factors might be shaping the way they engage with each other?
- 3) What are my perceptions as I interact with the local population?
- 4) How do my observations compare with my initial expectations or previous encounters/experiences as a host and/or backpacker?

Keeping these questions in mind, I recorded my thoughts and observations at the end of each day in a reflexive journal (See Figure 4). This allowed me to discuss my personal experiences and

interactions as I remembered them. I discussed what happened each day, what I had observed about the culture and interactions between locals and tourists, and included my own interpretations and ideas about these observations. I also recorded detailed narratives of my own personal experiences of kindness while I was in the field, and discussed how these experiences made me feel, and if anything had resulted from these interactions (i.e. keeping in touch, learning something new, new opportunities, etc.). This process allowed me to further connect to the topic and ensure that none of my experiences or observations were overlooked or forgotten.

Figure 4 : Personal journal entry example



Also aligning with the reflexive background of this research, personal photographs taken throughout my time in Iceland also helped me to observe and interpret the context of Iceland as an Arctic tourism destination, as well as the subsequent encounters taking place within it. Within social research and ethnographic studies, there is a growing interest and value of the use of

photography as research data (Bryman et al., 2012). Photographs taken in the field to capture specifically what the researcher has observed, “essentially become part of the researcher’s field notes” (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 115). Bryman, Bell, and Teevan (2012) emphasize the value of research-driven photography and video-recordings to not only act as memory aids throughout the course of fieldwork, but to also be used as individual sources of data that become “a ‘fact’ for the ethnographer to interpret” alongside other data and observations (p. 158) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Photo: Tourists and Locals gathering for annual sheep collection, Stykkisholmur



Together, my recorded observations and subsequent photography ultimately helped to lend insight into how I as the researcher understand Icelandic tourism; and specifically how I view and interpret the relationships between tourists and hosts, as well as how I understand my own role in the meaning-making processes that are ultimately produced and consumed through tourism.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews with Icelandic Hosts and International Backpackers

In beginning to recruit and interview participants, it was important for me to outline and define my participant categories due to the ambiguity of the terms *host* and *backpacker*. The *host* participants that I interviewed were any local to Iceland (Icelandic or expatriate) who were involved (directly or indirectly) with tourism; this definition aligning with similar studies examining the host-tourist relationship (see Sharpley, 2013; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). This included tourism operators who interacted directly with backpackers (ie. attraction guides, hostel workers, etc.); or locals who lived and worked near main tourist attractions visited by backpackers. Similarly, it was also important to outline the difference between *backpacker* and *tourist* in the context of this study, as well as explain my reasoning for making this distinction. In this study, I define backpackers as the way they are commonly defined in the literature, as travellers characterized by “a flexible tourism style, with most participants traveling alone or in small groups” and travellers who are “often keen to share the local lifestyle” (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 145). Backpackers differ from the traditional mass tourist in not only their style of travel, but they also traditionally spend a longer time in the tourism destination, in turn having more time to interact with the local population (Scheyvens, 2002; Hampton, 1998). Thus, in wanting to choose one type of tourist to remain consistent for this study, I chose to align my assumptions with those of Hunter (2001), Scheyvens (2001), and Hampton (1998) and look specifically at backpackers and their encounters and relationships with the host population. While backpackers may differ in terms of their backgrounds and nationalities as well as their travel characteristics and motivations, many backpackers have a similar style of travel, sometimes-similar appearance, and most commonly identify as a backpacker if asked (Sorensen, 2003). The intention for this study was to obtain the perspective of backpackers who have spent at least a week traveling throughout

the country, under the assumption that backpackers who had been traveling in Iceland for a longer period of time, were more likely to a) have come across these experiences; and b) had the time to reflect on the meanings and contexts associated with these interactions.

Once I had defined my potential participant categories, I used convenience and snowball sampling to recruit host and backpacker participants. Both of these sampling methods are commonly used in ethnographic inquiry, and involve collecting data from sources that are “readily available,” rather than randomly sampling the broader population, or having a specific sample population (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 219). As the researcher, I immersed myself in the tourism culture by traveling throughout Iceland for the duration of my fieldwork. Because of the social nature of travel and backpacking, I was able to recruit participants for my study as I met and interacted with them. As I interacted with potential participants, I recruited them based on a quick informal verbal survey to determine if: 1) they were a backpacker that had a social encounter with a local host during their travels in Iceland; or 2) they were a local that has had a social encounter with visiting backpackers. Once I was able to identify potential participants, I used my recruitment script as a guide to ask them to participate in my study (see appendix A). While convenience sampling worked to recruit most of my participants, it was often hard to find local participants who were not currently working or had the time to sit down for an interview. About halfway through my fieldwork I decided not to solely rely on convenience sampling, thus Snowball sampling was also used to ensure adequate host participation by asking current participants if they knew of anyone willing to participate.

Additionally, as I began to recruit my participants, I wanted to seek out participants that had a range of different experiences and backgrounds (i.e. not recruiting four backpackers who are travelling together, or two host tour operators working at the same attraction), as Bryman,

Bell, and Teevan (2012) state that “ethnographers have to ensure that they gain access to as wide a range of individuals as possible, so that many different perspectives and ranges of activity can be analyzed” (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 225). In terms of the sample sizes for this ethnographic study, I continued to interview hosts and backpackers until I felt I had developed an in-depth understanding of Icelandic tourism encounters from both the host and backpacker perspectives.

For the purposes of this study, twenty semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with both hosts and backpackers were conducted, providing a setting that allowed the participants to express their perceptions and experiences and encounters of kindness throughout their tourism experiences in Iceland (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). This form of interview is common within ethnographic inquiry, and is often flexible and conversational, “allowing interviewers to pursue leads offered by participants as they begin to open up and reveal their view of the social world” (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 168). Under the assumptions of symbolic interactionism, and drawing on tenets of narrative inquiry, the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study followed a broad outline based on the research objectives, with the participants’ stories ultimately structuring the flow of each interview (Appendix 4) (McCormack, 2000; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The general themes discussed in all interviews were based around kindness and host/tourist interaction; however, each interview progressed differently based on the participant’s individual stories. Brief background information about each participant was recorded ahead of time to be able to make connections between their tourism experiences and broader cultural values or influences (Daly, 2007; Bryman et al., 2012).

Nine interviews were conducted with Icelandic locals, seven of which had lived in Iceland their whole lives, and two being expatriates residing in Iceland ranging for 7-12 years. Four of the locals interviewed worked directly in the tourism industry – as guides, receptionists,

or hostel-workers – and all local participants acknowledged that tourism is directly or indirectly a part of their day-to-day lives. Alternatively, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with international backpackers of varying nationalities and travel time in Iceland. Interviews with locals and backpackers took place in various informal settings to ensure trust, ease, and comfort between the researcher and participants. Such settings included hostel sitting areas coffee shops, bars, and parks. Allowing the participant to choose the interview setting proved to be effective in ensuring that they felt comfortable and at ease, and that they trusted myself as the researcher throughout the interview process.

Table 4 contains relevant participant information for Backpacker participants, including their name (pseudonym), age, nationality, and length of stay is included. Similarly, Table 5 contains Host participant information, including their name (pseudonym), age, and occupation. Each participant signed a confidentiality agreement, and has given permission to allow use of interview quotes in reporting the findings for this study. Thus, participant quotes will be used to allow for further description of emerging themes, and formatted in italics. Additionally, where necessary, reflexive journal entries will be formatted in text boxes to show researcher reflection on specific themes.

Table 4
Participant information: backpacker

<u>Code</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>
BP#1	Sarah & David	17 & 19	England	Three Weeks
BP#2	Helen	24	China	Two Weeks
BP#3	Serena	22	Spain	Six Weeks
BP#4	Lucas	23	France	Two Weeks
BP#5	Nico	25	Germany	Two Weeks
BP#6	Joshua	30	Australia	Two Weeks
BP#7	Matt	30	Germany	Six Weeks
BP#8	Jonas	24	Germany	Ten Days
BP#9	Andrew	27	Poland	Two Weeks
BP#10	Mark	24	United States	Three Months
BP#11	Nate	18	Australia	Three Weeks

Table 5*Participant information: host*

<u>Code</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
H#1	Emma	25	Student
H#2	Henry	28	Student
H#3	Jon	33	Guide/Hostel Worker
H#4	Aron	60	Guide/Receptionist
H#5	Karl	33	Student
H#6	Marcus	30	Guide
H#7	Viktor	36	Receptionist
H#8	Tristan	31	Student
H#9	Alexa	23	Bartender/Hostel Worker

3.3.4 Crystallization

In qualitative research, Crystallization is defined as the use of combining various methods and points of view to enable the researcher a more complex multi-faceted view of the topic of study (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Ellingson, 2009). Thus, the combination of observation, interviews, and researcher reflexivity within this study acted as a means for crystallization, allowing for a fuller understanding of the research topic, and increased trustworthiness of the research outcomes (Daly, 2007; Ellingson, 2009). According to Janesick (2003), crystallization allows us to have a more complex understanding, and “recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world” (p. 67). And unlike triangulation techniques commonly used in quantitative research, crystallization is socially constructed and “can include deep and thick description, attention to complexity of interpretation, use of more than one form of inquiry (e.g., interviews, ethnography, poetry, autoethnography), and reflexivity” (Vik & Bute, 2009, p. 340).

Relatedly, spending six weeks in the field was another way to ensure crystallization and enhance trustworthiness of this research study. By spending time outside of observation and interviews exploring and experiencing the Icelandic culture and country, I was able to obtain a fuller understanding of the context I was studying. This allowed me to experience tourism in

Iceland first-hand, and to be able to observe and understand some of the changes that this country is experiencing through tourism, something that I would not be able to get adequately through secondary research. Spending the amount of time that I did enabled me to be fully invested into both my project, and its context.

In addition to keeping a reflexive journal of my own experiences, including both procedural and analytic memoing, to ensure each participant's perspective was adequately represented, I sent each participant who provided an email a copy of their interview transcript to ensure all points were adequately represented. This gave each participant the chance to clarify any of their points, or add anything they had missed. After reading their transcripts, all of the participants who had provided contact information, replied saying that the perspective represented in their transcript was adequate, and two participants responded with additional narrative content to add further detail and clarity to their stories.

3.3.5 Data Management

Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder. Immediately after each interview, files were downloaded onto an encrypted tablet and given a file number. Once downloaded onto the tablet, each digital file was deleted from the audio recorder. Once I had returned from the field, all of the files were transferred to my personal computer in an encrypted folder. After returning from the field, each digital audio file was transcribed into a word document, with each participant being assigned a pseudonym. I decided to transcribe all twenty interviews myself to remain close to the data and be able to begin understanding and interpreting the data as I listened and transcribed. Throughout this process I created a master list of all participants, participant information, and pseudonyms, which was encrypted on my personal computer to maintain confidentiality of all participants.

3.4 Data Analysis and Coding

Based on the overall purpose of my research and the way my participant interviews were structured, I decided to adapt analysis techniques from both narrative inquiry and grounded theory to analyze the participant stories elicited from the semi-structured interviews. Being that a main component or purpose of the semi-structured interviews was obtaining the participants' stories of kindness, I decided to structure my analysis process around what Glover (2003) and Polkinghorne (1998) refer to as *analysis of narrative*. Analysis of narrative is similar to other traditional qualitative analysis techniques, and essentially involves deconstructing participants' stories into various themes, and examining the interconnections between each story (Glover, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1998). Polkinghorne (1998) states that this form of thematic analysis "results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories, or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings" (p. 12). While analysis of narrative focuses specifically on the themes or elements that hold across the stories, I also used tenets of grounded theory in open and focused coding techniques to be able to determine the resulting themes from participant stories (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002). The following sections outline the analysis process used within this study in further detail, starting with the processes used for transcribing and reading participant interviews, followed by an outline of how the data was sorted and coded; and lastly how the subsequent themes were determined.

3.4.1 Reading the Transcripts

Before beginning data analysis, I wanted to gain a more in-depth understanding of each story as a whole. After transcribing, I printed out all twenty transcripts and read them each multiple times. I started with the backpacker transcripts, and moved onto the host transcripts when I finished, followed by sorting them into their distinct participant categories. This enabled

me to be able to gain a deeper understanding of each perspective separately before beginning to look at similarities across all of the stories.

3.4.2 Sorting the Data

Once I read through each transcript multiple times, and had an in-depth understanding of each participant's story, I wanted to start coding each transcript. However, after some struggling I eventually decided to sort my text data into themes based on my research questions *before* I started coding, instead of coding each transcript individually. I decided to do it this way because ideally the end result would be themes emerging across the stories, but for coding purposes, it was confusing to add codes and know exactly what they pertained to in the stories. For example, while examining the first transcript, the participant was discussing a situation they were in, and they addressed it as "challenging". So I wrote down the word "challenging" in the margins as a code, but then a day later when I looked at it I had no idea *what* was challenging, without reading more of the transcript. Were they talking about their hiking experience? Was their encounter with a local challenging? I knew if I just started coding each story like this, it would be hard in the long-term to effectively make comparisons and identify emerging themes across the stories.

Therefore, since I wanted my analysis to ultimately examine the interconnectedness between stories and common findings across stories, I decided to start looking at my data that way from the start. So instead of analyzing the data by each transcript, I decided to analyze based on my research questions. I then wrote out each research question and assigned it a colour:

- What meanings do hosts and tourists ascribe to the intercultural encounters experienced in Icelandic tourism contexts? GREEN
- What circumstances (spatial/temporal or social/environmental/cultural) enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships? BLUE

- How do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of social or cultural vulnerability? RED
- How might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships? PURPLE

While coming up with this process, I decided that to ensure I did not lose any important data that did not fit into the four categories, I would also add another category, which I then titled “Motivations – PINK”. Although not directly related to my research questions, I wanted to distinguish between circumstances that enable the encounters of kindness to occur, with the reasons why people were compelled to help or be kind. Some of my interview questions focused on host motivations for being kind, as well as the backpacker’s perspectives of what motivated the host to be kind to them, so I also wanted to include this in my analysis.

Once determining each category and assigned colour, I assigned a code to each participant (i.e. BP#5, or H#2), and went through each transcript and grouped sections of text based on the category/research question they related to (See figure 6). While much of the extracted interview data was easily distinguished as one category or another, there was sometimes overlap where sections of text were coded as two or more colours and sorted accordingly. Once all of the text in each transcript was sorted, I began to assemble a new word document consisting of the new data for each of the five categories. To maintain consistency, I did this twice, sorting the backpacker transcripts and host transcripts separately. Before pasting each section of text, I included the participant’s code, and line number of the original transcript the text came from to easily locate it in the original story later if I needed to.

Figure 6: Coding example: sorting transcript text into categories

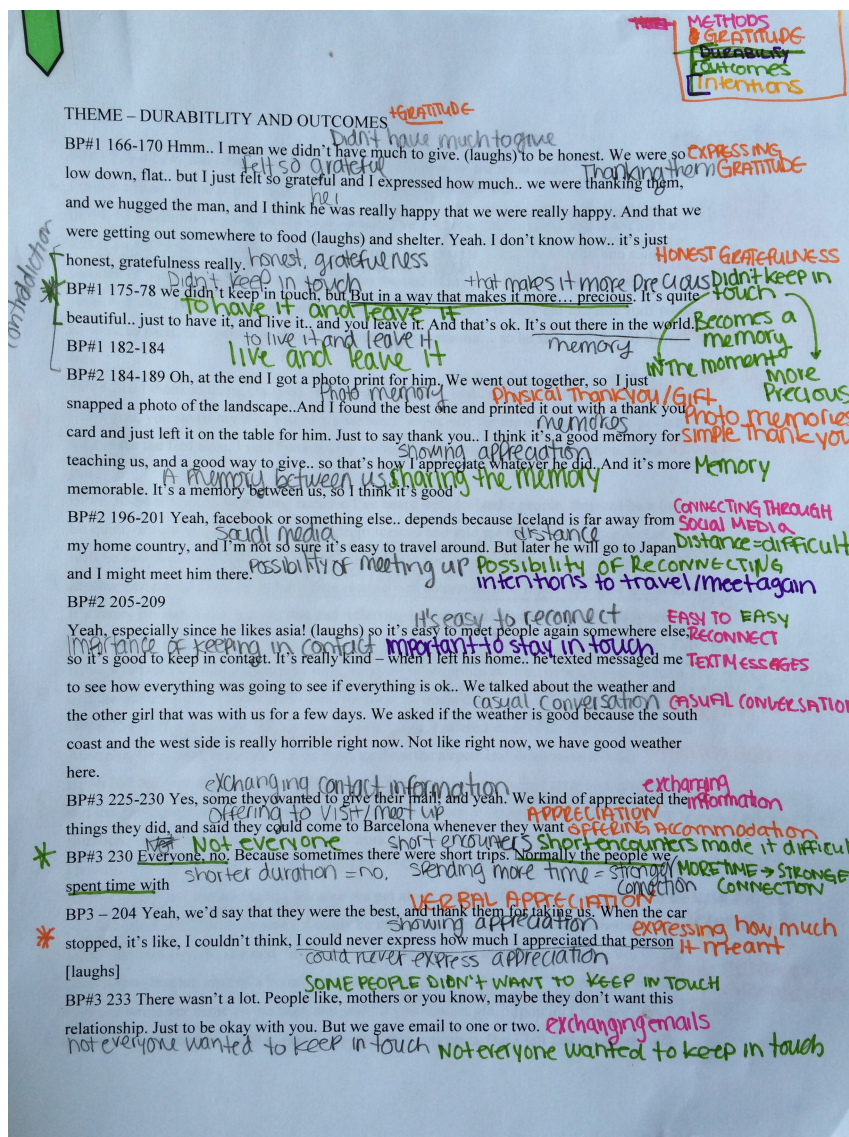
47 first day here I caught a public bus as far as I could, to get to a hike, and thermal spas. And I
48 started walking on the highway, and literally within 60 seconds of putting my thumb out, a car
49 stopped. I actually got a bit confused because I didn't expect a car to pull up that quickly. And I
50 thought it might be someone stopping to tell me I wasn't allowed to do it – or walk on that part
51 of the road. But she open the window and said "Hi, you can throw your stuff in the back." and
52 our journey kicked off, and it was just amazing. Um, she took me as far as she could, which was
53 more than enough. Yeah, it wasn't just a matter of her feeling like she was doing her duty, it
54 was... it was enjoyment. It was like she got a chance to tell me about Iceland and give me tips and
55 hints, and she told me some really cool things that I hadn't heard about previously, and those
56 places that I probably would have walked past without her, and one of them is probably the best
57 thing that I've done in Iceland. One of them definitely. And it's something that I've told other
58 people to check out. Yeah, the engagement, it never got awkward or weird, it was just brilliant. ⁶
59 Her husband was in the film industry, and so am I back home – so we had a lot to talk about, and
60 yeah. It's really interesting because I've heard with Icelandic people, they can be a little bit
61 quiet, or reserved, and then someone from Iceland had told me that it's true, they sort of, well he
62 saw them/their culture as sort of sitting back; and engaging or interpreting or taking in another
63 person – and based on what they receive will determine how much they give out. And it's funny
64 because since hearing that and reflecting on the people I've met, I've actually seen a lot of truth
65 to that. So this lady was really friendly. We got on the same page right away, and when she
66 dropped me off I started walking for another two minutes (and we're talking in the middle of
67 nowhere, so it wasn't on like a stretch of road where public-busses would come and you could
68 just jump on) and I didn't have a tent or anything like that, so it was out on a whim. But within
69 two minutes another car pulled over. It was a husband and wife, and he was a geologist. He
70 asked me if it was my first time in Iceland, and about what I wanted to do, so we had a
71 discussion around that. And from there he was able to, I guess understand that I was open to
72 learning as much as I could from him. So he taught me all about the rocks and stuff that we were
73 seeing, and events that happened in history. But he went beyond that. I had told him where I
74 wanted to go, but they – wow I haven't even thought about this – their kindness just went greater
75 and greater. They changed their entire itinerary for the day.
76
77 *Wow.*
78
79 To take me through to where I wanted to go. And on the way it included a stop by a really big
80 crater that's filled with water. It was amazing because I actually assumed that he was explaining
81 it to me – and this is kind of my pessimistic outlook I suppose – that he might try to end the ride
82 So I thought he was explaining to me and then we'd just stop off and they'd let me go there. So
83 I fished for a little bit and said "you know, is it okay? Do you mind stopping?" So he would
84 understand that I would prefer to go further, because I have seen that sort of thing before. But
85 no, he was literally taking me there and stopping in. He was a bit disappointed with this one area
86 of Iceland because, it used to be free, and he used to go there all of the time being a geologist,
87 but they sort of turned it into a bit of a tourist trap, so they make money off of it now. And as he
88 explained, he said "look, they took tax payers' money to make a boardwalk to make it more
89 accessible, which was fine, but then they started charging locals, which was not fine". He
90 explained to the lady that he just picked me up and that he worked there, so he got in for free and
91 they made me pay. So he took me up there and started explaining when it first occurred and how
92 it's evolved over time, and meanwhile his wife was sort of just sitting back in the car waiting.

3.4.3 Coding the data

Once all of the relevant text from each transcript was sorted into separate documents, I then started to code the data. Creswell (2013) states that coding “involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term” (p. 198). For this specific study, I decided to adapt some coding processes commonly used in grounded theory, starting with line-by-line open coding in pencil for each section of text in each category document. Once I had finished creating these initial codes, I then went back and implemented a more focused coding technique to start to categorize the most frequent or significant codes by labelling similar codes

by colour (See figure 7). Charmaz and Belgrave (2002), state that “initial or open coding forces the researcher to make beginning analytic decisions about the data, and selective or focused coding uses the most frequent or significant codes to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data” (p. 356). Doing this process by hand instead of using software allowed me to stay very close to the data, making it easier and more concise when it came to identifying emerging themes from the groups of focused codes.

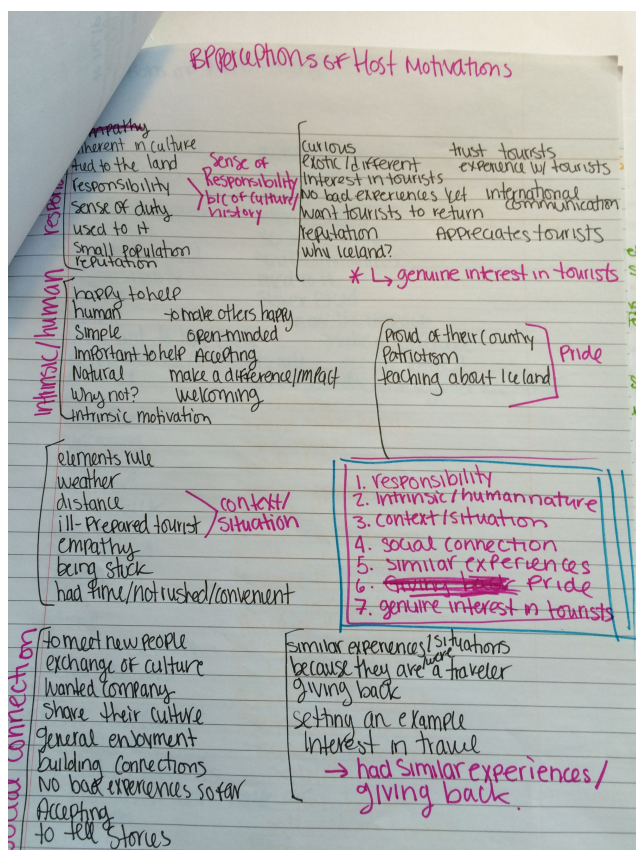
Figure 7: Open and focused coding example (open – pencil, focused – colours)



3.4.4 Determining Themes

After coding each category document, I wrote out every code by hand and listed them by groups of focused codes (Figure 8). Sometimes each group of focused codes clearly represented a theme without further dividing codes; this theme was then written beside the groups of codes and then listed on a separate document. When groups of focused codes were more broad or even contradictory, I would identify commonalities and separate codes into sub themes or completely separate themes. Themes were determined for each research question category document for each type of participant to allow for ease in data representation. Therefore, at the end of the analysis process, I ended up with ten sets of themes, five for each participant group.

Figure 8: Coding example: determining themes



3.5 Methodological and Ethical Considerations and Reflections

Although ethnography as a methodology and its related data collection methods presents a viable method for exploring the intended topic, there were some potential limitations in designing the research approach and methods for this study (Creswell, 2013; Roessingh & Duijnhoven, 2006). In evaluating ethnographic research in a tourism context, Roessingh and Duijnhoven (2006) suggest that this context sometimes “makes it difficult for the researcher to witness the ‘backstage behaviour’ of the actors in the field, for they are being identified as tourists and therefore the actors will treat them as such, thus displaying their ‘frontstage behaviour’” (p.117). Keeping this in mind, it was important for me to establish trust between myself and the research participants – and specifically the host participants. I genuinely felt that making them feel comfortable in the interview setting, and even talking about other things non-research related before the interview, enabled them to feel comfortable sharing their stories.

Additionally, aligning with the conceptual framework and related literature looking at the *third space* and cultural difference, I also needed to acknowledge the potential complexities related to recruiting host and backpacker participants from different cultural backgrounds. As a white and presumably wealthy female researcher and tourist, there might be a stereotypical, cultural, or hegemonic gaze associated with the recruitment process for this study. If members of the host population had experienced vulnerability associated with tourists and cultural difference, I as the researcher might have been seen as an outsider, resulting in participants not feeling comfortable discussing their experiences; or due to hegemonic perceptions, they may have felt pressured to act a certain way within the interview context. In going forward with the recruitment and interview process, it was crucial to keep in mind the notion of cultural difference and the subsequent impacts and influences, and to be flexible to the perceptions and backgrounds of those whom I interacted with.

Additionally, prior to undertaking my fieldwork in Iceland, The University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics approved my study, as well as all of the information I would be providing to potential participants (information letter, consent form, and interview guides). The formal ethics review consisted of reviewing issues of privacy, confidentiality, and security related to this study and the participants. The ethics clearance for this study can be found in Appendix G.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to analyze acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts, wherein emphasis was placed on understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships. As Iceland continues to grow as a prominent tourism destination, and the presence of tourists continues to impact the host community, it is of increasing importance to acknowledge how balance and understanding between cultures can be fostered. Understanding the ways in which a *third space* can be fostered in host-tourist relationships can be a key factor in addressing issues of cultural vulnerability in Arctic tourism contexts.

This study's exploration of acts of kindness between hosts and tourists in Iceland took place through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, with a focus on collecting participants' stories of kindness. Analysis of narrative was used to analyze interview data and draw interconnections and themes across participant stories in both backpacker and host participant groups.

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the outcomes of this study. Table 6 provides an outline of this chapter, summarizing the key themes and subthemes resulting from analysis. This chapter is comprised of four main sections that represent the primary themes resulting from analysis. Each section has a brief introduction, and is then divided into backpacker perceptions and host perceptions, each with resulting subthemes for each section. Section 4.1 introduces notions of vulnerability discussed in participant interviews, indicating specific concerns for each participant group. Section 4.2 looks to define and narrate kindness from each participant perspective to provide an overall context for this study. Section 4.3 explores the circumstances and motivations enabling encounters of kindness in participant stories. Lastly, section 4.4 brings

this study full-circle to explore specifically how acts of kindness experienced by participants can in-fact counteract previously discussed notions of vulnerability, also indicating specific participant outcomes related to relationship durability and overall outcomes of their encounters of kindness.

Table 6
Summary of outcomes chapter

4.1 Uncovering Vulnerability	
4.1.1 Backpacker Perceptions 4.1.1.1 Experiencing Difference 4.1.1.2 Conflicted About Being a Visitor	4.1.2 Host Perceptions 4.1.2.1 Shifting or Clashing Values 4.1.2.2 Tourist Presence and Impact on Culture
4.2 Narrating Kindness in a Tourism Context	
4.2.1 Backpacker Perceptions: How Kindness is Understood 4.2.1.1 Varying Degrees of Kindness	4.2.2 Host Perceptions: How Kindness is Understood 4.2.2.1 Making an Impact
4.3 Circumstances and Motivations Enabling Kindness	
4.3.1 Backpacker Perceptions 4.3.1.1 Social and Cultural Contexts 4.3.1.2 Spatial and Environmental Contexts 4.3.1.3 Temporal Contexts	4.3.2 Host Perceptions 4.3.2.1 Temporal Contexts 4.3.2.2 Social and Cultural Contexts 4.3.2.3 Spatial and Environmental Contexts
4.4 How Kindness Counteracts Vulnerability	
4.4.1 Backpacker Perceptions 4.4.1.1 Learning, Sharing, Understanding 4.4.1.2 Seeing Them as a Person 4.4.1.3 Potential for Durability of relationships Characterized by Kindness	4.4.2 Host Perceptions 4.4.2.1 Changing Perceptions Through Interaction 4.4.2.2 Potential for Durability in Relationships Characterized by Kindness
4.5 Summary of Outcomes	

4.1 Uncovering Vulnerability

For this study to be able to effectively explore and understand encounters of kindness and their ability to act as a *third* space in Icelandic tourism contexts, it was necessary to have an understanding of some of the potential feelings or perceptions of vulnerability from both participant groups perspectives. Various aspects, concerns, and feelings of cultural vulnerability were both implicitly and explicitly discussed by all participants through their narratives and

subsequent interview conversations. While some expressions of vulnerability discussed by host participants align with previous studies looking at cultural vulnerability and Arctic tourism, this research also revealed that similar feelings of vulnerability can also be experienced by visitors to the area, and that vulnerability can at times be cyclical in nature.

The following sections further explore some of the common perceptions of vulnerability expressed from both backpacker and host participant groups. Themes outlining notions of vulnerability uncovered in backpacker stories include the idea of noticing and experiencing difference while traveling; as well as vulnerability related to how hosts might feel about tourists and their impacts. Themes uncovered through host participant stories and discussion include shifting or clashing values related to tourism growth; feelings of vulnerability related to encroachment into culture and language; and feelings of invasion resulting from the presence of tourists and their varying degrees of cultural ignorance.

4.1.1 Backpacker Perceptions

A lot of the backpacker participants seemed to have had relatively similar reflections regarding their overall travel experience, and specifically in relation to their experiences of being a visitor in Iceland. Two major themes relating to vulnerability that were discussed by backpackers, were 1) their experiences noticing and experiencing cultural difference throughout their travels, and 2) struggling with their identity as a visitor and the implications that the “tourist” label has on how local people perceive and interact with them. These themes discussed in further detail in the following sections.

4.1.1.1 Experiencing Difference

In sharing their stories of kindness and reflecting on their overall travel experiences, many of the backpacker participants talked about how they experienced cultural difference

during various aspects of their travels in Iceland. Through expressing their narratives, many backpacker participants reflected on how different the culture in Iceland was in relation to their own, and how they sometimes felt hesitant to participate in certain things, or interact with certain people because of this awareness of difference.

In terms of specific experiences of difference, many of the backpacker participants mentioned feeling uncomfortable about not being able to speak the language. Some expressed that even though they knew that English is widely spoken around the country, they were still hesitant to assume that everyone that they met spoke English. Joshua reflected on when he first arrived in Iceland, describing his hesitance to engage and interact with locals in English, stating:

At first... when I first arrived, I was very hesitant to speak English to someone, because I'm not in an English speaking country. Yes, they do speak English in most Scandinavian countries, and also have really good English speaking skills, but I never just assume... and I would actually have like anxious feelings, or be very hesitant to speak in English. So I would tend to just not say anything. If I wanted a bag, and they didn't ask me if I wanted a bag, I wouldn't ask in English. I'm not going to be like 'can I get a bag', unless I really needed it. So if it made me a little bit uncomfortable for twenty minutes...or ten minutes, I'd take that discomfort, then just to assume they can speak the same language.

Other participants also shared similar perspectives in relation to language and culture, noting feelings of uncertainty regarding how they were supposed to engage with locals, and not knowing what was expected of them.

Although many of the Backpacker participants mentioned noticing differences in the language or culture throughout their travels, some also discussed feelings of vulnerability related to their own identity. For example, Helen discussed how she sometimes felt like she obviously stood out amongst the local population due to her ethnicity. She shared her experiences of walking through some of the smaller towns and villages, sometimes feeling uncomfortable when people would stare or point:

I mean, yeah... the people on the streets, sometimes they would say “Hi” and sometimes in the smaller towns, the kids would just look at me weird, like “why is that Asian girl walking around here?”

Relating to identity, some participants noted feeling like they stood out due to what they wore, or what belongings they were carrying. Some backpackers even noted feeling vulnerable about certain places they visited that were not specifically targeted towards tourists, noting that locals seem confused or curious as to why they were at that specific club or bar, and not at the popular tourist locations. Andrew noted feeling self-conscious about traveling with his large backpack in some areas of the country. He commented:

You know, some people don’t like backpackers... They think they are homeless or something. I have like four thousand dollars with me right now in my photography gear, I’m not homeless.

Similar to some of the backpackers who had experienced cultural difference and vulnerability related to ethnicity and identity, I also encountered some notions of vulnerability related to identity during my own travels in Iceland. In two of my journal entries I reflected on some of my experiences feeling vulnerable or self-conscious as a tourist or backpacker:

August 30th/Day 3

Even though a lot of the people here speak English, you can still tell that tourism is just beginning for the most part, and the people do notice that you’re in their space. I was walking towards the campground with my big green backpack (clearly identifiable as a foreigner), and two little boys passed me, one yelled “hello” in his best English, and when I said hi back, they both repeated it in the way I said it and giggled while running away.

Sept 4th/Day 7

Later we went out to a fancier place just before it got busy. Everyone was dressed very nicely, and Miss Iceland even made a surprise celebrity appearance. We spent some time grabbing drinks and looking for a place to sit, but I kept noticing people looking at us like we were out of place or something. We both felt like this the whole time we were there, and it made us feel super uncomfortable. At one point we had found seats, and a guy came and asked us to leave because the seats had been claimed (yet nobody was sitting there and it stayed empty for a while). When we finally found seats, a local woman at a nearby table got up to get a drink and looked at us and said “you won’t steal my stuff right?”. That was certainly unexpected and we both felt weird about it, so we ended up leaving.

While noticing and experiencing difference was a main theme related to cultural vulnerability among the backpacker participants, the following section expands on this idea of identity, and relates to notions vulnerability that backpacker participants experienced related to their overall role or perceived identity as a visitor.

4.1.1.2 Conflicted about Being a Visitor

Another emerging theme related to cultural vulnerability was that many backpacker participants were concerned or conflicted about their overall role as a visitor to Iceland. One concern that was often discussed by backpackers was how they felt conflicted about the divisions or barriers that automatically exist when they assume the role of a tourist and start to observe and experience the host culture. Although this is a concept inherent to being a tourist in general, some of the backpacker participants pointed out that just being in Iceland as a visitor was enough to make them feel a certain division between themselves and the host population. For example, Sarah shared her experiences of being stranded in a small village, and what it felt like to be just helplessly watching and observing the locals while trying to find her way back to Reykjavik:

*They were collecting the sheep from around the land, and so there was quite a lot happening. But we were just kind of on the side watching, and trying to get out. In a way we're not really part of their culture, we're just here looking around... as tourists, and that creates some division. There's this division that we come to **their** land, and we come to **their** homes...*

This notion of division was also discussed by some backpackers who reflected on visiting some of the popular natural attractions in the country. While it is completely normal for people to visit these locations, some backpackers reflected on what it might be like for the people who live there, and the potential negative feelings they may have regarding the huge number of visitors coming into their space.

Relatedly, another theme uncovered through the backpacker narratives was that notions of vulnerability felt and expressed by backpackers seemed to be tied to potential vulnerabilities felt by the host community – creating an almost cyclical process. More specifically, backpacker participants seemed to be very aware of the immense growth of tourism and some of the negative impacts occurring, and as a result of this awareness, they sense that the local people might not want them there. In other words, the vulnerability or resistance that hosts may feel regarding the invasive nature of tourism and tourists then creates a sense of vulnerability among backpackers who might not feel welcome as a visitor. Joshua expressed this sentiment when discussing a conversation he had with a local while hitchhiking. He reflected on feeling conflicted about being a tourist and wanting to visit the popular sites around the country as the local man was telling him about many of the negative changes occurring from tourists being there, and how some of the locals were feeling about these changes; Joshua stated:

He was a bit disappointed with this one area of Iceland because it used to be free, and he used to go there all of the time, being a geologist... but they sort of turned it into a bit of a tourist trap, so they make money off of it now. And as he explained, he said 'look, they took tax payers' money to make a boardwalk to make it more accessible... which was fine, but then they started charging locals, which was not fine'.

My own experiences and observations mirrored some of the feelings brought forward regarding hesitation that backpackers feel as a result of the perceptions that locals may have regarding tourism. In my journal I reflected on some of my observations, stating:

Sept 8th/Day 11

Through casual conversations with tourists and backpackers, I have been getting mixed reviews about people's first impressions of Icelanders. A lot of people (even people with stories of kindness) also have noticed that some people stay a bit guarded from tourists. But I also think it depends on where you are, and maybe what impact tourism currently has on those people. It's definitely not a secret that not everyone is a big fan of tourism. One girl that I met said that she found people to be a lot nicer in the West part of the country where there are less tourists.

Backpackers' feelings of vulnerability were also associated with the idea of feeling alienated or separated because of their immediate "tourist" label. Whether they had been in the country for two days or for three months, backpackers often expressed how they felt that locals grouped them together with day tourists or cruise ship passengers, with an associated stigma of being an English-speaking mass tourist, only stopping by for a short visit. Nico expressed this sentiment when discussing how it felt when he experienced resistance and avoidance while attempting to ask locals their recommendations for a bar to hang out at in a small village. He stated:

Some people, like school kids and teenagers, they were even changing to the other side of the street when we were coming to them. And we just wanted to ask if there was any bar in this town, so we made a move to them, and they were realizing that... you could see it in their faces, and they just went to the other side of the street. And when we went to the little villages, I just had the feeling that the smaller the towns get, the more they avoid people who speak English.

When asked about his perception of this avoidance and resistance he experienced from some of the locals, Nico reflected on some of the trends that people in these small villages are experiencing, noting that he understood where some of the resistance stems from. He stated:

Well sometimes you go to a town and it's basically just people living there doing their jobs, and then just two or three hostels and one supermarket. That's basically it. So I have a feeling that these people don't like that... like they are living their lives, they have their surroundings, but there are always people coming and going.

This suggests that because of the perceived local resistance discussed in the above examples, that many of the backpackers ultimately want to differentiate themselves from the other forms of tourists. This also relates to one of my own reflections in my personal journal, where I reflected on a similar experience to Nico's, and shared my thoughts about how some of the locals in these

small towns must feel about day trip visitors and their almost invasive nature. I took a photo of the scene in front of me (Figure 9) and reflected:

September 4th/Day7

We had to go a little out of the way for gas because it's so hard to come by in the Highlands. We ended up in this little community just outside of the entrance to the highland roads. It was on the main road, and we had the worst timing, because as soon as we pulled up, so did three huge tour buses. The population of this town was no more than 30 people, yet daily, 300-400 people stop at the same time to eat, use the washrooms, and snap photos of their daily life. I found myself getting irritated, even as another visitor. People were feeding candy to the local dogs, and climbing fences to get that perfect photo. Someone even asked us to move the car while we were getting gas, because it was in the way of their photo of the church.

Figure 9: Tour buses at the Modrudalur Farm Settlement, East Iceland.



Overall, while social and cultural impacts of tourism on host populations are very real and commonly discussed in the literature, the above examples illustrate that cultural vulnerability ultimately works both ways, and that it is important to be able to acknowledge and understand the barriers and cultural difference that both backpackers and hosts face in tourism situations.

The following sections discuss the notions or themes uncovered in the host participant stories and conversations relation to cultural vulnerability.

4.1.2 Host Perceptions

Because of the uniquely catalyzing nature of tourism in Arctic regions, it is important to thoroughly understand the social and cultural impacts that tourism is having on the local community. Aside from hearing the host participants' main stories of kindness, it was also important to get a general sense of their understandings and perceptions of the tourism industry and its impacts; and overall, the topics of impacts and vulnerabilities became a powerful focus of many of the host participant interviews. Major themes relating to vulnerability that were discussed included 1) shifting or clashing values among community members and stakeholders, and 2), tourist presence and impacts on culture. These themes are discussed further in the following sections.

4.1.2.1 Shifting or Clashing Values

One major theme related to cultural vulnerability from the perspective of host participants was that although so many good things have come from tourism in their country, they certainly do still feel the adverse effects. Even though Iceland is still in the early stages of tourism development, these casual conversations with host participants ultimately denote that they do feel the effects of tourism change, and that these feelings of vulnerability are definitely growing alongside tourism growth. When asked about her perceptions on tourism growth, Emma described what she felt were common thoughts among locals who may not understand the more positive impacts of tourism. She stated:

So it's getting so big, but I don't think Icelandic people know the opportunities... and some people like hate tourists because all of a sudden, they're all over the place. And they don't realize what this is. They don't realize that tourists are putting money into the economy. They don't realize the big picture, and how we can use this to benefit us and to make the most out of it for the tourists as well.

Emma's comments about tourists all of a sudden being all over the place, speaks to the rapid growth of tourism, and how this unexpected change has significantly impacted members of the population. She noted that people are starting to hate tourists because they do not yet understand tourism or recognize the benefits, which suggests potential for further intensification of vulnerability as tourism growth continues. Similar impacts experienced by locals that also related to vulnerability were described by Viktor, as he stated:

Hmm, these changes in tourism... the only change has really been in the volume. And well, there are more people coming, and I'm finding that obviously it's affecting the housing market in Reykjavik, and also in the countryside.

Aron also touched on some of the more negative changes brought on by tourism, and specifically local displacement from the city center because of rent increases and growth in guest accommodation. He stated:

The only thing I could say that is negative about it... in this area we're in now, in the centre, the rent has increased a lot. Because there are a lot of guest houses or Air BnB's...and if you look into Air Bnb, there are a lot of them in the centre, and people aren't happy about that. People don't have the chance to move into the centre, because the rent is so high now.

Emma noted that the issue is "not that the tourists come here," but she believes that people are frustrated that everyone visits at the same time. She articulated:

It's overcrowded. That's like more than the population of all of Reykjavik area. So it's crazy..

Aside from obvious crowding and traffic in busy tourist areas, another main concern addressed by host participants related to tourism growth and cultural vulnerability was that the country's values are starting to change. For example, some of the host participants mentioned the government's plan to develop new tax policies aimed at nature conservancy in popular tourist areas. Another related topic of interest among host participants was that every Icelandic local

now has to pay attraction fees at many of the waterfalls and natural attractions that they used to be able to see for free. Alexa shared her opinion on some of these changes, also noting that the people involved in planning for tourism are clearly trying to take advantage of the tourists visiting Iceland. She stated:

A lot of tourists want to come here because we have a beautiful country and everything. But I think it's like... these past two years, I think it's mean what Icelandic people are doing... they're greedy. They're trying to get so much money from tourism, they charge you for looking at waterfalls and stuff like that. I think it's progressing for the worst now, which is sad.

It is clear that tourism has become a main priority, yet not everyone seems to have the same feelings towards tourism, thus causing conflicting opinions and values among the population in regard to future tourism development. Some of the participants noted that tourism stakeholders and the Icelandic government seem to be struggling to cope with and manage the rapid changes that have recently occurred. This appeared to be the view held by Viktor, who stated:

A lot of people talk about "the damn tourists filling up the place" and stuff like that, but they don't realize that it's not the individual tourists at fault. It's the country that is too small to accommodate the huge number of people flowing through – and Iceland has nobody to blame but themselves for this. They are the ones that advertised the country and pushed for this... They're not really sure how to deal with it. I think things are getting a little bit too tourist friendly. There have been several places that have been either permanently modified or basically permanently damaged. Not necessarily by the tourists, but by the Icelandic authorities as an attempt to cope with the tourists.

As seen in the above example, aspects of policy change and actions taken (or not taken) by tourism stakeholders or authorities were generally talked about in this manner, demonstrating clear disconnect or conflicting values regarding the country's overall approach to tourism.

While change and values were a main concern related to feelings of cultural vulnerability among the host participants, participants also expressed feelings of vulnerability due to changes

linked to language, cultural practices, and overall tourist presence, which are discussed in detail in the following section.

4.1.2.2 Tourist Presence and Impacts on Culture

In addition to value changes as a result of tourism, host participants also noted conflicting feelings regarding the integration of more internationalized practices and dialects into their culture as a result of tourist presence in Iceland. Some of the host participants spoke specifically about how there is such a need now for Icelanders to begin to adapt to cultural changes that have been brought on by tourism and the presence of tourists in society.

One of the changes discussed was the issue of language and the encroachment of English into the Icelandic culture. Almost all of the host participants who lived in Reykjavik mentioned that they barely ever hear anyone speaking Icelandic in the downtown core, and that all of the retail workers downtown speak English. Viktor, Henry, and Alexa voiced similar concerns regarding language, noting specifically that the older generation is becoming more and more concerned for the loss of the Icelandic language in society due to tourism integration. They noted that more and more Icelanders are learning English through school or through work in the tourism industry, but some of the older generation, or those who are more rurally located, still have not had that exposure. This was made clear by Henry as he stated:

The island is very isolated, so my grandparents have barely met people that speak English...but the younger people today, they're speaking very good English. So they're meeting more people and it's easier for them to adapt to the foreigners than for the older people.

Victor had a similar point of view regarding the encroachment of English, noting its practicality with the way that the tourism industry is progressing. He stated:

I think Iceland has realized that there's such a small pool of people who just speak Icelandic now. If you only know one language, you're going to be stuck on this rock, and that's it.

Relating to the increased exposure as a result of tourism, some of the host participants also noted how locals are starting to see more and more tourists enmeshed within their daily lives and cultural practices. Although tourists have been visiting Iceland for years, locals are starting to note feelings of invasion as tourists become more involved in local life. This was apparent in Henry's statement, when he mentioned:

If you just go to a coffee house, or the swimming pools – I'm not talking about the huge tourism places like the golden circle and stuff like that – but the local places. It's getting more... how do you say? International? More cultures, more people with dark skin... and people speaking English. I think most people feel good about it, but I think some people are getting annoyed by it too.

As exemplified in Henry's statement, other participants also noted that people are just starting to get used to seeing foreigners in church, and are noticing that tourists are starting to move beyond just visiting the popular attractions, and are starting to get more involved in more local activities and practices, such as visiting the public swimming pools. Henry elaborated, sharing that some of the older generation feel as though they are losing aspects of their culture. He reflected:

So I'll say some people are getting annoyed by tourism. The older people usually go to the swimming pools. We have this culture about going to the hot tubs, older people meeting up... and now it's full of tourists. So you can see the changes...negative, definitely, but also our economy is better because of tourism. People are getting jobs. But there are still a lot of people not very satisfied.

Like Henry expressed, Iceland's economy has definitely improved because of tourism, but it is still extremely important to recognize the feelings of locals of all generations.

The final point raised by host participants in relation to cultural vulnerability and tourist presence was the potential ignorance of some visiting tourists, and how that might be affecting the local population in regard to how they think about and perceive their own culture. For example, Alexa reflected on what she has observed between other locals and foreigners while

working in a hostel bar, indicating some disconnect between the two due to the way that tourists talk about the Icelandic culture. She stated:

Some people are really offended by tourists. Because they think that we live in snow houses. People get offended by that when you say it to them, but it's funny. It's 2015, Icelanders don't live in snow houses... you should be able to laugh at those comments...

Also related to potential tourist ignorance, some of the host participants noted feelings of invasion in regard to how tourists are interacting with the natural environment. They noted that some tourists do not seem to care whether or not they are harming the natural environment, which in turn causes frustration among the locals who work to preserve and protect nature. I observed an example of this which I illustrated in a personal journal reflection during the second week of my fieldwork in Iceland, when I first started to observe and interpret some of the interactions taking place. I reflected:

Sept 8th/ Day 11

Clearly many people are doing really well off of tourism here. But I think the feelings are very mixed for a variety of reasons. I was waiting in line at the campground yesterday, and the guy in front of me asked the girl at reception about the box on the counter for donations for Iceland's nature fund. The guy asked what it was, and she said that "it's to help repair Iceland's environment". He asked why, and she replied with "because so many tourists come here and use the nature, it's deteriorating. People walk and drive off paths and it wrecks the environment. This fund will help fix it". She was definitely passionate about the environment, but she also seemed frustrated by some of the impacts tourism and tourists have on her country.

While many of the host participants do support tourism development to some degree, it is clear through their stories and reflections that notions such as the encroachment of English, the internationalization of certain cultural practices, and tourist ignorance are growing concerns among various groups of the local population.

The following section provides an overall summary of the overarching topic of cultural vulnerability and the subsequent themes uncovered from both backpacker and host perspectives.

4.1.3 Summary of Uncovering Vulnerability

There were a variety of concerns related to cultural vulnerability and Icelandic tourism addressed in this section by both backpacker and host participants. For the backpacker participants, the main concerns were related to noticing and experiencing difference during their travels in Iceland. Some of the backpacker participants noted feelings of vulnerability based on how locals may have perceived their cultural differences, and specifically their ethnicity and the language they spoke. The ways in which they were perceived in the eyes of the host population in relation to other tourists was also a concern among backpacker participants, with some of their experiences and interactions with hosts ultimately accentuating feelings of vulnerability related to their own “backpacker” identity. Relatedly, some backpacker participants reported feeling vulnerable based on their perceptions of how the host population felt towards tourists in general, indicating an almost cyclical process of vulnerability; many of the backpacker participants noting their awareness of the overall impact of tourism on Iceland, and expressing how this awareness combined with their experiences had shaped their perceptions of how hosts may ultimately perceive international visitors.

Feelings of cultural vulnerability as a result of tourism were also revealed by host participants. The immense growth of the industry was a main concern that seemed to have triggered feelings of invasion and vulnerability, as one participant aptly noted, “*all of a sudden, the tourists, they’re all over the place*”. In addition to the almost unexpected growth they have experienced, some of the host participants are also concerned about crowding and displacement due to growth in attractions and number of guesthouses, feeling like some areas in Reykjavik no longer cater to the local population. This also relates to feelings of concern addressed by participants in relation to encroachment into culture and language, and how the ability to speak

English is becoming almost a necessary skill. Participants also noted that occurring in tandem with tourism growth seems to be the shifting – and sometimes clashing – values of the Icelandic population and main tourism stakeholders. Some participants also revealed notions of conflict among the general population and the Icelandic government in terms of plans to cope with, and accommodate the increasing number of visitors to Iceland.

Lastly, although this study's methodology was designed strategically to analyze and represent backpacker and host narratives separately, this section on uncovering vulnerability has started to identify how perceptions and experiences of these two groups can overlap. While backpacker and host perceptions will continue to be represented separately throughout this chapter to remain consistent, it is important to acknowledge such similarities moving forward. This enables us to situate our thinking regarding the concept of *third space*, where the focus should be on what brings us together, to foster mutual understanding and trust.

The next section discusses the notion of kindness, and specifically how the participants define and understand it through their stories.

4.2 Narrating Kindness in a Tourism Context

To be able to explore and interpret the ability for kindness to act as a third space in tourism encounters, it is first important to provide a context for what exactly kindness is, what it means, and how it is understood or defined by the people experiencing it. Because eliciting the stories of kindness from each participant was an imperative part of the semi-structured interview process, it is important to get a sense of how each individual participant defined kindness, and how it was ultimately understood or narrated in their specific stories. Additionally, examining the stories of both backpacker and host allows for a further understanding of what constitutes an act of kindness from both participant perspectives. Whether being kind meant offering directions,

helping in an emergency, or just saying hello on the sidewalk, it was important to distinguish and acknowledge the broad spectrum of kindness encounters featured in the participants' stories.

The following sections acknowledge some of the varying ways that participants understand and interpret kindness through examining the ways in which they narrated their specific stories of kindness.

4.2.1 Backpacker Perceptions: How Kindness is Understood

To get a sense of how each individual backpacker participant understands and interprets kindness, this section will provide a brief introduction and description of their individual stories.

Sarah and David visited Iceland for the sole purpose of adventure, and wanted to experience the country's extraordinary nature and landscape. The end of their 100km hiking journey brought them to a small village where they became stranded, as the transportation system they anticipated using had suspended their services for the season. With dwindling food and water, wet clothing, and lack of shelter, they came across a local man who invited them into his home and provided them with food, shelter, and eventually helped them find a ride. Sarah reflected: *"We nicknamed him Totoro because he was smiling all the time... but he went and he made us sandwiches and gave us food, and lots of other Icelanders came and helped us. And they were all very supportive, because we were trying to hitchhike and there was nobody going. This was still at the hut, at Landmanalugar, which is in the middle of nowhere with nothing around in the Highlands)... and you can only get there in these big cars, and they are usually all booked up... and there's no bus or anything. It was really nice because this guy – he was an Icelander and he owned some horses – he started asking around to other Icelanders to give us a ride, and eventually he got this whole system working! There were lots of Icelanders walking around asking other Icelanders... and they gave us food and made sure we weren't hungry. He started talking to us and yeah, they invited us into their hut, which was really warm inside... In camping.. if you just really focus on basic things.. like shelter, food, sleep and then you walk... it then becomes such a soulful process in the end. And I guess that these small acts that we take for granted all the time.. having food and shelter, and all these things.. and then you suddenly feel.. these acts just become so precious".* For Sarah and David, the "act" of kindness they experienced was not a singular act, and ultimately included many aspects of support provided to them over several hours of being stranded.

Helen visited Iceland on route to her destination in the Faroe Islands. The kindness she experienced took place over four days – the entirety of her experiences with her Couchsurfing host, John. From the moment she arrived in Reykjavik, John had provided

advice and direction, ensuring a safe arrival to his home. Helen noted how open and accepting he was of her and her culture, and how open he was with sharing aspects of his own culture with her. Having had experiences with Couchsurfing hosts before, Helen was surprised at how involved John was during her time in Reykjavik. Helen noted that John's kindness varied, as he offered to drive her around to various attractions, showed her interesting places in his town, and cooked her a traditional Icelandic meal. While they had organized to meet in advance, John exceeded Helen's expectations as a Couchsurfing host with the level of kindness he expressed throughout her stay.

Serena experienced many small acts of kindness during her six weeks in Iceland. When asked to describe an encounter of kindness, Serena noted how hard it was to tell just one story, and that every single hitchhiking experience she had during her travels was an act of kindness in her opinion. While some of her encounters of kindness were very short, involving brief social exchanges, or a quick ride through Reykjavik, she claimed that these acts were still very significant. In reflecting on one specific encounter, Serena revealed that there was not much talking or exchange at all due to the language barrier, but because of the local couple's passion and willingness to help, it ended up being one of Serena's most memorable moments. She reflected: *"It was in a peninsula called Snaefellsness. And yeah it was the only day that we had rain while we were hitchhiking, because the other days we were really lucky. We were almost at the end of our trip, and we said now comes all the bad and the rain! (laughs). And it was raining really hard, and there were a lot of cars passing and nobody stopped. Until this Icelandic couple stopped, and I think they didn't speak English at all, so it was weird because almost everybody speaks, but they just stopped and figured out that we were going to the campsite – and they were going to another place – but they took us all the way to the campsite and they even stopped in the middle of the rain"*.

Lucas chose Iceland as a destination for his two weeks' vacation as he was interested in experiencing the Nordic culture and climate. While trying to hitchhike to the most Northern point of Iceland, Lucas experienced the most significant act of kindness he had encountered during his travels in Iceland. He reflected: *"it's when I left Isafjordur actually. It was an old man who had to go a doctor for his eyes, but the hospital told him to go to Reykjavik, because they were more experimental. So he had to go to Reykjavik, and he took me on his way. Actually it was really hard to hitchhike there. I waited two hours and thirty minutes, and it was really cold outside. I started to freak out a bit. But he took me on the ride, and he actually showed me around. We had to drive through all the fjords... each fjord is pretty long. And when we were on the car, he told me 'oh! Do you see this house? This is a lady... I don't remember her name. She's a farmer, she has two kids... her kids are studying this...' He told me all about the local people during all the travel. We stopped at a farm, which was a friend of his. To drink a coffee, so I drank a coffee with local people which I didn't know, just drink a coffee... It took like, twenty minutes.. it was not so long because we had a long trip to do. And also when we were in the car, he made some stops to tell me... 'hey look, there are seals down there.. Oh look, a whale!' but I missed it (laughs). He finally dropped me in front of my accommodation in Holmavik, and because there was no one around, he dropped me in front of the information centre and waited for me to ... I wanted to know which was the cheapest*

hotel in town, so I got the information and he dropped me right in front of the hostel”. Lucas was not surprised to be picked up, as hitchhiking is relatively common – but he was moved by how passionate this man was, and how much he went out of his way to ensure Lucas really learned about and experienced the Icelandic culture.

Nico travelled through Iceland by rental car with two of his friends from home, keen on seeing as much as they could in a short amount of time. Because of the way his trip was structured, Nico noted that he had not interacted with many local people, and was never in a situation where he urgently needed help or guidance from locals. Despite this, Nico was still able to tell a significant story of kindness, because to him, Kindness was simply having meaningful conversation and spending time talking and telling stories. Nico remembered being at local bar in Akureyri, and then having a local woman approach their table and start up a conversation with them, which eventually led to a full night of talking to her and meeting her friends. He reflected: *“we were sitting outside and I kind of had the feeling that we won’t have much talking. And even if there will be other foreigners, you would just share your adventures you did in Iceland. Actually we picked that place also for that, because at that point I really had the feeling I could talk better to other travelers, than the local people... and then there was a girl coming over, and she was just sitting there alone smoking a cigarette, she just came over and took a chair like it was completely common to do that, and just sat at our table. And right in the first seconds she wanted us to guess where she was from just by talking.. and I knew it was a foreign accent, and I didn’t realize that a foreign accent could be the same in Iceland. (Laughs) and then she told us, and she was actually quite open, and she said she doesn’t live in this city. She lives in a small town next to the city, and she likes to go here and to go to the hostel bar to just learn about people.. why they’re coming to Iceland, and what they are thinking about this, and she was really interested in what we think about Iceland. She wants to be in touch with people coming here. And that was really nice”* For Nico, the act of kindness he experienced was a simple introduction that ultimately turned into a very memorable night.

Joshua had spent close to two weeks exploring Iceland on his own, and revealed that he had experienced some aspect of local kindness every single day so far. While most of his stories featured his experiences with locals while hitchhiking, he noted that the most significant encounter of kindness was with a local man who provided him with unexpected and unconditional support, and eventually friendship. Joshua reflected: *“...This one guy was just incredible. He stopped his work, because he was working late at night online... He heard me sort of talking to someone else about what I wanted to see and where I wanted to go to see the northern lights... so he stopped and came over and introduced himself. And he was like a Northern Lights specialist. He’s a photographer, and he spent one or two hours just explaining all the areas in Iceland within close proximity to Reykjavik where we could see them. He helped map out a plan and we got to know each other over a couple of days. Because he had done an incredible journey once in his life... and he overheard me talking about wanting to do something similar – not as crazy as him – but something similar, something physically really demanding... So he came over and explained what he did, and when we got talking I told him I really wanted*

to see the North, and he lived there. So he offered me his email address and told me to contact him if I was ever up there. And he even offered me a place to stay”.

Matt spent just over a week traveling through the southwest region of Iceland, and even in his short time traveling, had experienced various encounters of kindness. When asked to describe his stories, Matt remembered his experiences interacting with a hostel receptionist, and while their encounter just involved casual conversation, he still appreciated her time. He reflected: *we talked the whole day. and she... well we just had a good time. I can't tell you a specific example of how she was kind to me, but she was very nice.* In another story, Matt shared how he arrived at a coffee shop before doing a hike, and realized he forgot to bring water, but the shop owner found a bottle for him to fill. Matt reflected: *She kind of um asked me if I had enough water with me and all of that stuff and I didn't prepare anything, didn't take water or anything, so she, in that café she had a coca cola bottle, and she just dumped the whole bottle and filled it up with tap water and gave it to me. And provided me with water. So that was pretty kind”.*

Jonas was studying abroad in Iceland for the summer, and talked about how the intense kindness he received from locals began as soon as he stepped off of his ferry from Denmark. He had plans of traveling around the country before starting school, but was unable to carry all of his belongings with him for the whole trip, so a local woman kindly offered to take them with her to Reykjavik. As Jonas stated, *“I had very much stuff with me as I came here on the ferry. I had my backpack where I had everything for hitchhiking, and had another bag with just a few clothes to change because I'm studying here... And yeah, I thought always so great it would be if the first lift in Iceland maybe could take all of my stuff to Reykjavik and keep it there, and I could travel on. But I didn't really think it would happen. But it happened! The first lift just took all of my stuff to Reykjavik, kept it here for the time. I kept my backpack for traveling, but all the rest I had, another big bag and another small bag, and she just kept it. And it's even more special, because this woman has just like a small chamber here... it's not really a room, it's just a chamber; just a bed and crazy clean. I told her the story that I thought about it and how awesome it would be... I didn't dare to ask. And she just said 'yeah I could do that', And she did. So it was more than kind of her to do that.*

Andrew, who was traveling around Iceland with just his photography gear and very little money, had numerous stories of kindness involving local people picking him up while hitchhiking. For someone who had hitchhiked extensively in other parts of Europe, Andrew was still surprised at the expanse of generosity shown by the local people who had picked him up. At one point while Andrew was hitchhiking, a local man had changed his plans and went an hour out of the way, just so he could show Andrew a great lookout spot to take photos at. One particular encounter of kindness that resonated with Andrew happened as soon as he left the airport. He reflected: *“It was like 9pm, and I was just wondering how could I approach the northern lights. I just went out of the airport, trying to hitchhike...to catch some kind of car. I saw the northern lights, and then when I was doing something with my camera... I don't remember, just looking at the ground. This car stopped, and this little family of Reykjavikians just came out of nowhere... absolutely nowhere. So they took me in their car, drove me to Reykjavik, and they were telling me*

absolutely everything about Iceland. I mean, there was this kind of young gentleman in the backseat. He was like maybe 8-10, something like this. By the way, his English was like perfect. Like absolutely perfect. And he also was trying to teach me how to pronounce the Eyjafjallajokull. The volcano. And they took me to the city centre. They were also asking me... and this is real, if I wanted to go to their home and sleep for the night.

Mark had spent close to three months in Iceland, and experienced many encounters of kindness during his travels. As a videographer, Mark found some part-time work with a family that owned an adventure travel company, but ended up becoming very close with the family. They also helped him find additional work, and introduced him to a friend with very similar interests, significantly altering his travel plans for the better. Mark also discussed another experience of kindness he had with some locals he met at a bar, stating: *Everyone here has been so sweet. I met these people in the Westfjords. And they hung out with me all night, and were just super kind and super nice... they introduced me to all of their friends. One guy introduced me to his mom, because everyone goes out together – especially in a small town like that. He was just showing me around that night, and I met this other kid who was actually DJ-ing at the bar, and he finished and we just hung out until late... He was really nice. He was more just hanging out, but they would like legit hang out with me. In America if you're drinking and out with a bunch of people – especially ones you don't know – and you sort of venture off on your own somewhere... they I guess forget about you. But these guys were always making sure that I was involved, and yeah. One of the guys ever since then, a few nights we've gone out and he showed me a lot of stuff. And literally he's been one of the best resources. He knew a filmmaker, and ended up introducing me to them... Told me things to do. And he'll tell me where to go and stuff like that.*

Nate recently graduated high-school and was visiting Iceland with his friend. Together they were mainly backpacking and hitchhiking around the island. At one point during their trip, Nate and his travel partner were surprised at how generous the locals were who had picked them up, and amazed at how they all had exceeded his expectations of what getting a ride would entail. He stated: *we were hitchhiking from Reykjavik to Akureyri, and kind of the astonishing thing about it, is that we really only waited maybe maximum fifteen minutes throughout the whole thing. So, we had three lifts, and all three times it was really, really quick to get a lift. And... it's not like.. umm.. They.. the people who gave us lifts were... quite accommodating in like where they could drop us off, and answering any questions about the local area, and just you know.. asking us about what it's like where we come from as well. The first ride, yeah it was really interesting. It was this guy who was an economics lecturer at one of the universities... I don't know which one exactly, but yeah. So, what kind of surprised us was that... he was this kind of business man-looking guy... maybe a little bit older, but he pulls up in this almost brand new VW Pasat, and it's like "Damn, okay! We should kind of brush off, clean up before we get in... because it's a nice leather interior car" So we chucked our stuff in the boot, and he gave us a ride for about forty-five minutes. And he told us a lot about local politics... But yeah, he was telling us all about that, and it seemed like a kind of important part of something like hitchhiking. Because when you go to a hostel, you talk to people...*

I mean everyone mutually has no idea about Iceland. Maybe some idea, but definitely not as much as a local perspective. Having that opportunity to talk to a true local, is really useful, and it's a different experience than talking to people who are visitors just like you. Because visitors might say 'you need to go here... check out this location, there's a really nice waterfall here' but I mean, with that same guy... he was telling about local politics, which is a weird kind of departure from what you normally learn as a tourist.

Personal Reflection

September 6th / Day 9

Before coming to Iceland I had made a post on the Iceland CouchSurfing group that I would be in the area and would love to chat and/or travel with locals and other travelers during my time in the country. Shortly after making that post I was contacted by a local named Liam who was looking for people to join him on a camping trip in the interior Highlands because the Highland roads had just opened for the season. Essentially you need a four-wheel drive vehicle to explore that area, which is something I probably couldn't afford, or even have the knowledge or driving experience to do on my own). We asked each other a few questions via Facebook, and without skyping or meeting, we had a plan to travel together for six days. He knew I wanted to see Iceland and trusted me enough to bring me a long, so I immediately trusted him as well. So 5 days ago Liam pulled up in the rented jeep along with three other international travelers. It was amazing how easily conversation flowed between strangers – how much we all trusted Liam and his plans, driving skills, and knowledge about where we were going. That first day I thanked him for bringing us along on his adventure, and he said he was excited to explore more of his country and he was happy we could join him. Not many visitors have the chance to travel through the Highlands because of the difficult terrain and the time it takes to get around. These last six days overall were incredible, and I am eternally grateful for Liam and his willingness to be so open and inviting to strangers. Liam taught me so much about Iceland's history, culture, language – everything!

Personal Reflection

September 15th / Day 18

Jovi invited me with him to a local football game that was directly beside my campground. It was really nice of him to bring me along with him, as I don't think many visitors go to these games. He was super popular at the game and probably knew at least twenty people, but still chose to sit with me so we could chat (and he could explain soccer rules to me). Throughout the game we ran into people that would speak Icelandic to him, but he would introduce me to them in English and explain who I was in English rather than Icelandic so I felt included, and so that they would then know to speak English to me. It was such a good time, and he even introduced me to a lot of people that I could potentially interview for my study. We also got talking about a small town that I would be visiting on the weekend, which happened to be where his family was from. He said that he would be in the area and that we should try to meet up. He also gave me a lot of travel tips for around that area that ended up being very helpful.

4.2.1.1 Varying Degrees of Kindness

In narrating their stories of kindness experienced while travelling in Iceland, many of the backpacker participants made a point of saying that they came to Iceland expecting a certain amount of positivity and acceptance due to previous research, and based on what they had read in their guidebooks or various media articles. Even though most of the backpackers were prepared for a certain amount of local acceptance and positivity, a major theme arising from their stories was how surprised they were with the kindness and positivity they ended up experiencing, and how a lot of the situations of kindness they experienced were unexpected. Joshua exemplified this element of surprise when he talked about his experiences hitchhiking during his first day in the country:

“It was just, yeah. It was an amazing start to the holiday because I didn’t expect it. When people told me in the past, “you can hitchhike around” I didn’t expect that kind of thing so quickly and so much generosity. It was really like – yeah, it was almost like an episode of twilight zone because I had just arrived and just didn’t expect that kind of kindness”.

Sarah also reflected on her initial reaction while receiving support from a group of locals in the highlands, stating how unusual she thought it was for people to show such support for complete strangers, and how that kind of generosity maybe would not occur at home in England. Similarly, Serena was surprised when a local woman offered to help her find a job, and asked her for her C.V to distribute around the town to see if anyone was hiring. She reflected:

“It was really, really good. Like, she, I didn’t even really tell her to do anything, but she said that if she knows about something, she’ll give my CV to everyone. In Spain that probably wouldn’t happen”.

In these examples the local was never explicitly asked to help out, yet did so without expecting anything in return.

While some backpacker stories reflected feelings of surprise to even encounter such kindness at all from the local people, others who had explicitly asked for help or support did not expect the local to do as much as they did in certain encounters of kindness. For example, Joshua did not expect the level of kindness and generosity he received from a local woman while hitchhiking, he stated:

“she told me some really cool things that I hadn’t heard about previously, and those places that I probably would have walked past without her.. and one of them is probably the best thing that I’ve done in Iceland. One of them definitely. And it’s something that I’ve told other people to check out. Yeah, the engagement, it never got awkward or weird, it was just brilliant”.

Similarly, Nate did not expect to learn so much from the people who picked him up while hitchhiking and talked about how surprised he was that they were so open to engaging with him, he reflected:

“The amount of stuff we learned from drivers telling us about.. even what they were up to that day, or the politics, history, cultural stuff. The combination of all three of those things. I have a good understanding... not necessarily a good understanding, but a more in depth than the say.. more superficial understanding that you get from reading like a Lonely Planet or something”.

In addition to noting how the backpacker participants talked about and ultimately defined the acts of kindness they encountered, it is also important to discuss the variety of acts that were specified as kindness. For example, there was a clear consensus among many of the backpacker participants regarding hitchhiking as an encounter of kindness, as the locals went out of their way to pick them up and get them to where they needed to be. While some of the hitchhiking stories featured locals that went above and beyond the backpacker’s expectations with the level of conversation and commitment to showing them various attractions, the short and/or silent ride durations were also discussed and valued by the backpackers. Additionally, in stories like Sarah and David’s, the level of kindness was clear as the locals were clearly helping them out in a

tough situation; but in stories like Nico's, the kindness was in the act of going out of their way to have a meaningful conversation with him. While most of the main stories discussed by backpackers featured in-depth involvement of the local, many backpacker participants also mentioned other stories of kindness that involved brief encounters when asking for directions or guidance – ultimately signifying a broad spectrum of what kindness entails to these participants.

4.2.2 Host Perceptions – How Kindness is Understood

Similar to the importance of understanding the perceptions of backpackers who were receiving the acts of kindness, it was also key to provide a context for what exactly kindness means to the locals who are exemplifying it. While the backpacker participants told stories of their experiences of being the receivers of kindness during their travels, the host participants revealed stories wherein they have been the givers/providers of kindness to visitors to Iceland. Additionally, as some hosts have been involved with tourism and tourists for longer than others, some stories date back further than others and were not as detailed as backpacker participant stories that had just occurred. One main trend identified through the host participant interviews was that each person had many, many stories of kindness, and these were sometimes grouped together when it was a frequent occurrence, or they could not recall the exact details of a certain situation. Overall, this section will illustrate how the host participants understand, interpret, and define kindness by providing a brief introduction and description of their individual stories.

Emma began her interview with explaining how her life currently revolves around tourism! As it was near the end of the summer, she had spent the majority of July and August either travelling abroad, or travelling in Iceland with Couchsurfers. She mentioned that during the summer, if she was off work and at home, then she was probably hosting at least one Couchsurfer. When asked to tell a story of kindness, Emma stated: *“Well. I don't know how to put this, but that's kind of what I've been doing with all the people that have been coming to my place. It might be different because that's what is kind of expected of me because I'm offering it... But when I'm free Thursday nights I go to Couchsurfing gatherings, and sometimes I've been there just to relax and meet people. Not with intention to like.. well not with any intentions. But I have met*

people there that have been like homeless... and say "oh shit, I don't have any place to stay... maybe I'll go to the campsite and see if anyone can squeeze me in" and I mean I've taken those people home with me... and I mean, I think it's... It is an act of kindness per say, but I don't feel like I'm doing anything extraordinary. I think it's just common sense... I mean I have the space. It's not an inconvenience for me when I have my bedroom, for someone to sleep on my couch. And if I can do someone a favour, of course I would do that. Emma reflected on her overall experiences as a Couchsurfing host, noting that she would usually tour people around Reykjavik, and if she had time, she would also accompany them on various trips around the country – both for her own enjoyment, and because people appreciate when she provides a local perspective.

Henry had multiple stories about times where he had met tourists or backpackers on the street in his hometown of Reykjavik, and how it was very common to be stopped randomly and asked for directions. One particular instance that resonated with him was when he met a girl traveling on the same flight from Stockholm to Iceland. He reflected: *It was when I was flying home. I had a six hour layover... I had been traveling for 16 months. I was flying from Bangkok to Stockholm on a Wednesday. I thought it was a good idea to take one night in Stockholm... but after traveling in Asia, you just want to go home. So I ended up sleeping in the airport and I met this Swedish girl there. And we ended up talking and she said "I'm going to Iceland" and I said "I live there" ... And she said "I'm going to this festival" and it's one I've been to very often. So we ended up hanging out in the airport for the while, and her friend that was supposed to pick her up, he had some problems... so my parents were coming, so we picked her up... They picked me up and we drove her to the festival. So yeah... that happened like three weeks ago.*

Jon works at a remote hiking hut in the interior Highlands, and when asked to tell a story of kindness, there was one situation he encountered that really resonated with him. He noted that not many people venture out to the hut, and that if any sort of emergency were to happen, they were very far from any sort of civilization. He reflected: *But there was this German couple – they were traveling here... and they had their pickup truck car rental car, with a camping house on the back. And then when they got here... so I guess they were about fifteen-twenty kilometers out and blew one tire. Then they met the search and rescue team, and they tried to fix the tire, with you know, their equipment and weren't able to.. And then on the way here, about three kilometers out, they blew another tire. So they drove and - they already put the spare under. So they drove on a flat time for like three kilometers, came here.. (laughs), and I was like sorry, you're not going anywhere. You're just waiting here until you get new tires. So essentially, we tried to give them – we offered them food. They had to stay here three nights because the car rental wasn't really – well, yeah, because we're really far from everything".* Jon noted that the couple was very appreciative of his support, as it was a very unexpected and stressful situation for them.

Aron has been involved in the tourism industry for many years, and has an extensive history of involvement with Couchsurfing. When asked to tell a story of kindness, he noted that if he has time, he'll always stop for people on the street that look lost or that flag him down. He also noted that he'll spend time on Couchsurfing's online message

boards to answer any questions that people may have about the area. In talking about his involvement he stated: *“Well, I don’t host people because I only have one room. But I have taken people on tours quite a lot, if you look at my references on couchsurfing, you would see people mentioning that quite often. And yeah, well that’s about... like I said, down at the meetings... I try to give some info, or help out with some discounts, discounted car rentals, horse rentals, bus tours, and a few more things. So that’s about what I do. I mean, of course... even if I walk on the street and I see people that are looking on a map or something, I try to... and I think most people would do this... I try to point out and help them to see where to go and stuff... Because I know what it’s like to be lost. On my travels. And I always pick up hitchhikers if I can. Oh yeah, I’ve done that a lot myself... so I know the story behind that”*. Another story that Aron remembered was about a girl who had organized to stay with a Couchsurfing host, but at the last minute that person had changed their mind and she had nowhere to stay. She showed up at the Couchsurfing meeting to let him know, and he frantically called up some of his friends to find her a host for the night.

Karl remembered many instances where he had helped people who were unsure of where they should travel around the country, or that were lost in a specific part of Reykjavik. He noted how he often meets tourists while hanging out downtown, and does not hesitate to help if they need it. He reflected, *“well a lot of times I’ve helped people finding out what routes to take, and you know... helping them like what places to see in Iceland and stuff like that. Getting a bus, and yeah”*. One specific story of kindness Karl told involved a visitor from Spain that was expecting much warmer weather. Karl met him while at a bar in Reykjavik, and the tourist mentioned that he was very unprepared for an upcoming hike in the highlands. Karl exchanged information with him and arranged to meet up to give him some warmer clothes and gear so that he was much more prepared for his hiking and camping trip.

Marcus meets many tourists every day through his work as a guide in Reykjavik. He reflected on some of his experiences meeting and helping people outside of work, stating: *“Apart from job related in the working hour, you know there are endless times where people have come to me in the street, and asked me ‘where is this place’ or when they’re holding a map, and they’re looking up in the air and I’m just ‘oh they are so lost’ and I tell them where to go. You don’t have to a hero of the day to do that. But you know, I’ve never saved anyone’s life, but I’ve pointed out a couple of things, places, where to go. I’ve ended up going around on, with you know maybe someone that I’ve met here, maybe ended up going on a tour... Couchsurfers I’ve met for coffee and just for a chat. I guess that’s considered help I guess, or just being you know.. I remember I did it three or four times or so, and it was kind of random. Just threw up an advertisement you know “does anyone want to meet up?” And yeah, it was... they kind of came to me, rather than me... maybe I approached them as well. It was just an advertisement I put on the forums for Reykjavik. So it was... then one or two said yes.*

Viktor lives in downtown Reykjavik and works for an adventure travel company, and has many daily interactions with visitors to Iceland. He noted that he always stops to help someone if they seem stuck, but it is something he has come to expect because of where

he lives. When asked for a specific story, he stated: *“umm, to me it all seems so boring. Of course I’ve helped people when they’ve asked for directions. But you get used to doing that in this town. You get used to people asking you to look at a map in a weird corner of the city. I’m not going to nominate a time when I did that...I’ve helped pull several people out of situations, and I don’t know if it’s been a local or a foreigner, or a local foreigner or tourist foreigner. I mean, couch surfing itself is.. I don’t actually consider it an act of kindness. Since I don’t really believe in the website itself – I’m very much into it for myself. I do it because I simply enjoy interacting with other people.*

Tristan, a guide working for an adventure travel company, had one specific story of kindness where he helped out some tourists during an emergency in the Highlands. He was working at the time, but noticed that some people outside of his group had fallen through a snow pass into icy water. He reflected: *“I ran down, told my group to wait for me here on the snow. Got them, walked closely and just managed to get one and two out. The third we had to fish the person out, because he was locked into a whirlpool.* Tristan noted that he then sent his group to continue with another guide, while he proceeded to help the tourists and wait for a helicopter to get them to safety.

Alexa lives in Akureyri, works at a hostel bar, and does not hesitate to help out anyone if they need directions or travel advice. When asked to tell a story of kindness, she remembered numerous times where she offered to show people around, or even walk them to a specific location if it was on her way. She stated: *“A few times I’ve seen people being really lost, so I go up to them and ask them if they’re lost. Once a guy was really offended that I asked him if he was lost. Because he was looking at a map and cursing, so of course I thought he was lost. That was the only time that someone has not liked that I offered help, but all the other times people are really, really, really grateful for you walking up to them and offering to help them. I can only think of like when I met some people here, and they were only staying one night in Akyreyri.. so me and that same girl that drove with me to Reykjavik.. we took four Canadian guys, and we showed them around the town, took the whole night.. and we ended up going home at 4am. Because we showed them.. we drove through and showed them our secret spots.. there are swings in the middle of random forests and stuff like that. And they said that was the coolest experience they had in Iceland so far.*

4.2.2.2 Making an Impact

In explaining their encounters of kindness, the host participants described their experiences in various ways, and the acts that constituted as “kindness” varied for each participant. Additionally, the ways that the host participants described their experiences were much different from backpacker participant stories in that they were not as in-depth or detailed. Some mentioned that months or years had gone by since their specific encounters, whereas most of the backpacker stories had just occurred; and other host participants mentioned that these

encounters happen so frequently that it is harder to remember specific details about a specific experience.

In describing their stories of kindness, a common theme that signified an “act of kindness” for host participants was whether or not they had made an impact on someone. A common phrase used when discussing their encounter of kindness was that helping or acting kind towards the tourists was definitely “worth it” and that they felt like they had made an impact. Whether it was a brief encounter while providing directions, or they ended up spending more time with the tourist, the host participants all described encounters where they had specifically gone out of their way to be kind to someone.

While making an impact was a commonality in most of the host participant stories of kindness, there was a broad spectrum of the kindness described among host participants. Some participants immediately reflected on times where they had quickly helped people with directions or answered questions on the street, where others talked about more involved encounters where tourists really needed their help. Hosting Couchsurfers, or being involved in the couchsurfing community was a commonality among a lot of the host participant stories, signifying a strong community of kindness already existing throughout the country, with many people willing to share their homes with incoming visitors.

4.2.3 Section Summary

As has been made clear in this section, the participants as a whole had numerous stories and experiences of kindness. While some stories shared commonalities in terms of the context (i.e. hitchhiking, Couchsurfing, etc)., there was a broad spectrum of the specific type of encounter or “act” of kindness people had encountered.

The backpacker participants had discussed specifically the notion of unexpected kindness. When narrating their stories, they specifically focused on how surprised they were that the local had helped them, or their shock at the level of kindness they had experienced. Even if it was simply a small gesture or greeting, the fact that they did not expect it is what translated into the notion of kindness for some backpacker participants.

While a friendly greeting or simple conversation was defined as kindness for backpackers, what stood out however in the host participant stories was that each encounter discussed had specifically made an impact. Though many of the host participants noted interacting with tourists daily, when thinking specifically about an act of kindness, they chose to talk about something bigger, or more impactful. For example, many participants discussed helping out in an emergency, providing spaces for people to stay, or lending warm clothes to people who needed them. Accordingly, it seemed that kindness was defined differently to hosts than it was to the backpacker participants, many of whom highlighted positive conversations and social involvement they had with locals as specific acts of kindness. Moving forward, it is important to recognize the broad spectrum of what kindness can entail. It is imperative to acknowledge that similar situations can mean different things to different people based on how they understand, interpret, and make meaning of these interactions.

Additionally, something important to acknowledge or reiterate – which speaks to the notion of *third space* – is that while hosts and backpackers differed in how they understood and described the varying impacts of kindness, a lot of their stories were very similar. Similar in the experience they encountered, but also in the way they talked about and described the impacts and meanings of their stories overall.

Looking at specific participant stories has allowed for a deeper understanding of *what* kindness means to the participants in this study, but in order to further understand kindness as a *third space* and a way to counteract vulnerability, it is important to understand the *how* and *why* through understanding the circumstances and motivations that ultimately enable encounters of kindness to occur.

4.3 Circumstances and Motivations Enabling Kindness

In order to understand the full extent of encounters of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland, it was important to explore circumstances that enabled these encounters to take place, as well as the human motivations behind what ultimately led people to be kind towards strangers. Analyzing both backpacker and host perceptions regarding the circumstances and motivations for kindness allowed for a fuller understanding on how these encounters come to be.

The following sections further explore some of the common themes related to circumstances and motivations for kindness, expressed from both backpacker and host participant groups. Analysis of participant stories and subsequent interview conversation brought forward common themes of social and cultural contexts, spatial and environmental contexts, and temporal contexts from both backpacker and host perspectives.

4.3.1 Backpacker Perceptions

When describing the context of the encounter, the backpacker participants were also asked to reflect on what they thought had led to the encounter, as well as what may have motivated the local to assist or act kind to them. While backpackers were not the ones specifically acting kind in the context of this study, they were the receivers of these acts, and their perceptions on the context and motivations behind these encounters were important in understanding the overall picture. The three most common themes regarding circumstances and

motivations that enable kindness to occur, were social and cultural contexts, spatial and environmental contexts, and temporal contexts. The following sections further explore each of these themes related to backpacker participant stories.

4.3.1.1 Social and Cultural Contexts

In explaining the context of their stories of kindness, many of the backpacker participants described circumstances of social exchange as both the basis for their encounters of kindness, and as a motivation for kindness. Some participants noted that because they seemed so identifiable as a tourist, locals would come up to them at bars or various attractions and ask them where they were from, which would then lead to further conversations, exchanging of stories, or introducing them to family or friends, or showing them specific places or attractions.

In every story of kindness told by backpacker participants, there was no real reward or foreseeable benefit motivating the local to help out or act kind towards the backpackers. For the most part the backpacker participants attributed this to the local just simply enjoying social interaction and forming connections with foreigners. For example, Nico reflected on his experiences meeting an Icelandic local at a bar, engaging and sharing stories with the man and his friends for the rest of the evening when he then offered to drive Nico and his friend back to their hostel. When asked why he thought the man acted so kind to them, having just met them, Nico stated:

I think it was just because he had a great time with us. And we had a great time with him, and you can always see that in the other person when you're talking to them. It was a nice night out and we actually enjoyed it, so he wanted to something nice, just to end it...and he was saying something like "yeah, see ya next time maybe! Maybe here, maybe in Berlin" and he went off, and it was amazing. And... so he didn't have to do it, he did it just because he wanted to be kind to us. There was nothing that he owed us or anything like that. It was so nice.

Relatedly, Serena reflected on a time during her travels when she was visiting a very small town in Eastern Iceland, and a group of locals seemed very happy to invite her along to hang out with them for the evening. She commented:

They don't have any cinemas, so they can just hang out, and that's pretty good too. When you're not close to entertainment, you have to be in contact with people.

Tied to this notion of wanting company and social engagement as a motivation for kindness, Serena also reflected on the numerous times she was picked up by locals while hitchhiking along Ring Road, she stated:

We had to go really long distance and usually it was people that travel alone, so maybe they wanted to spend the travel, and talk, and just meet someone. They would always say that they were just traveling alone and didn't have anything else to do.

Another perceived motivator that backpackers noticed related to social connection and engagement was that some of the locals helped them because they have had similar experiences, or were similar in age. For example, Helen spent a few days staying with a Couchsurfing host in Reykjavik who went above and beyond her expectations, taking her on a road trip and showing her a lot of sights around the city; she attributed his motivations for kindness to being a traveller himself, she noted:

He is a traveler. He used to be a traveler a long time ago.. twenty years ago.. so he really likes to share and show how good his country is...And he can give a lot of advice.. where to go, about hitchhiking, information. Yes, he's really good. Because I think the difference from couchsurfing and the usual people you meet – couchsurfers are usually people who do a lot of traveling. So they try to give you a hand because you are a backpacker. All of the couchsurfing people are nice and talk to you. They'll try to help you in any way they can, and that's how I saw the country.

When asked to reflect on the motivations of the Icelanders who invited him to hang out with them, Nico also believed that it was because they too had similar experiences or interests to his own, and they were also close to him in age. He stated:

Much of the younger people actually enjoy us being here and talking to us, because they actually do the same. Or want to do the same. Like, they want to go to other places, or they've been to other places.. so they want to share this with other people who have been to other places. So you have a communication which is completely international.

Another commonality among backpacker perceptions of host motivations was simply that the locals seemed to have a genuine interest in tourists, and that the locals were also curious about why backpackers ultimately choose to visit Iceland, and what they are interested in seeing. In Joshua's story about his first hitchhiking experience, he explained that he was very curious as to why the local woman had picked him up, so he decided to ask her if she had picked up hitchhikers before, and why she was compelled to do so; he explained:

Yeah, she said she found it interesting to meet people from other countries. And she took a lot of enjoyment in finding out what I wanted to see in Iceland, what I wanted to do, and why I was there. But there was, with her, I genuinely took a sense that she likes tourists. That they really enjoy them. I didn't feel like I was a burden in any way. Nothing but amazing responses when I told them I was from Australia. I think because it is so far away from Iceland, and I haven't met a lot of Australians here on this trip – and normally we're everywhere. So I think it was a bit of that exotic nature to it as well. But yeah, they were really lovely, and again, very very interested in what I sort of wanted to achieve in my time. And why Iceland. That was sort of an ongoing theme. Why did I come to Iceland?

Aside from strictly social motivations, another potential motivator discussed in the backpackers' stories of kindness was the idea of locals helping for the sake of helping, and really putting trust into the international visitors, even when just meeting them. This was exemplified in Jonas's story when he talked about a situation where a local woman helped him by giving him some food and water after an exhausting hike, and how he felt like she assisted him just for the sake of helping, and seemed very happy to do so. He shared:

I didn't give her money, but um I thanked her a lot of times, and um I think that's the least I can do. I mean she seemed happy as well to help somebody. I mean, she wasn't like, 'oh, these tourists, and another guy that hasn't prepared at all'. And she kind of seemed happy about that, and also it was a very small town, and that there's even someone coming there that was no from there town seem to...I don't know, make her really happy.

Similarly, Sarah reflected on her experiences stranded in the Highlands and receiving help from a local man, sharing that while it meant so much to her that he provided shelter and food, it seemed like such a simple, natural gesture coming from him. Sarah expressed:

I think he was really happy that we were really happy. And that we were getting out somewhere to food (laughs) and shelter. Yeah. I don't know how.. it's just honest, gratefulness really. And why not? If you just can. Why not? Even if it's just a simple thing, it could change so much. Like a sandwich,.. for us in that moment it changed so much! (laughs) because we were so hungry.. But for him, it was such a simple thing, to share some of the sandwiches they had..

In looking back at his experiences of kindness, Mark also believed that it seemed so simple and natural to Icelanders to lend a hand, and that it might be inherent in their culture to be so open, accepting, and ultimately trusting of strangers. He stated:

I've been trying to think about why they are so content. And, I honestly think it's because they're so open and willing to be accepting of different people and be accepting of different beliefs. When I've asked someone something.. they've been really responsive... and I'm trying to figure out what motivates them to do that. But I think that in Iceland, they just have a very nice, open, and accepting culture. And they're very...receptive, and open to... I don't know, just good-ness. They don't really shut anything down. They want to help you. Yeah very open-minded.

Also discussing this notion of being so open-minded and trusting, Joshua expressed:

It's really interesting. The first lady actually told me that I was the second hitchhiker she'd ever picked up. She said "yeah, you just looked like a nice guy". I have a big beard and scruffy hair and a big backpack on... and I'm not a small guy, so that's a big deal. In many countries, a woman on her own picking up a guy that appears how I do... you wouldn't expect that. So yeah, I was very conscious of this.

These last few statements confirm that a lot of these encounters of kindness were perceived to have occurred because the local was intrinsically motivated – not because they felt like they had to, or felt that they could get anything out of it – but just that it was something they did for the sake of helping or acting kind towards someone. Joshua’s last statement also reflected a commonality among many of the backpacker stories regarding trust and what an important role it played within these encounters of kindness.

Another common theme coming out of backpacker participant stories that relates to social or cultural contexts was that a strong hitchhiking culture exists among locals in Iceland. While the inherent historic or cultural nature of hitchhiking was previously discussed as a local motivation for picking up hitchhikers, in some backpackers’ stories, the local’s kindness went way beyond just giving a ride, and the car ride itself became a specific context for certain encounters of kindness. For example, Joshua described his first full day in Iceland and how amazing his hitchhiking experiences were – not because he got to where he needed to be, but because of the people he met, and the meaningful conversations he had with them. He reflected:

So I haven’t really hitchhiked a lot. I mean I have accepted rides in other countries from people, and I’ve been in jams – sort of stuck in the middle of nowhere, but this is my real first experience putting my thumb out. And on my first day here I caught a public bus as far as I could, to get to a hike, and thermal spas. And I started walking on the highway, and literally within 60 seconds of putting my thumb out, a car stopped. I actually got a bit confused because I didn’t expect a car to pull up that quickly. And I thought it might be someone stopping to tell me I wasn’t allowed to do it – or walk on that part of the road. But she open the window and said “Hi, you can throw your stuff in the back..” and our journey kicked off, and it was just amazing. She took me as far as she could, which was more than enough. Her husband was in the film industry, and so am I back home – so we had a lot to talk about... We got on the same page right away.

In this story he focused more on the meaningful conversation he had, rather than getting where he needed to go. Joshua also described another hitchhiking experience where the family that

picked him up really surprised him with their kindness and generosity in wanting to help him to really explore their country. He stated:

I started walking for another two minutes (and we're talking in the middle of nowhere, so it wasn't on like a stretch of road where public busses would come and you could just jump on) and I didn't have a tent or anything like that, so it was out on a whim. But within two minutes another car pulled over. It was a husband and wife, and he was a geologist. He asked me if it was my first time in Iceland, and about what I wanted to do.. so we had a discussion around that. And from there he was able to, I guess understand that I was open to learning as much as I could from him. So he taught me all about the rocks and stuff that we were seeing, and events that happened in history. But he went beyond that. I had told him where I wanted to go, but their kindness just went greater and greater. They changed their entire itinerary for the day to take me through to where I wanted to go. And on the way it included a stop by a really big crater that's filled with water. It was amazing because I actually assumed that he was explaining it to me – and this is kind of my pessimistic outlook I suppose – that he might try to end the ride. So I thought he was explaining to me and then we'd just stop off and they'd let me go there.. So I fished for a little bit and said "you know, is it okay? Do you mind stopping?" So he would understand that I would prefer to go further... because I have seen that sort of thing before. But no, he was literally taking me there and stopping in. So he took me up there and started explaining when it first occurred and how it's evolved over time, and meanwhile his wife was sort of just sitting back in the car waiting. So that really touched me.

Every participant who had hitchhiked during their travels discussed how a simple ride had turned into either meaningful conversation, or another completely separate act of kindness in driving them to different attractions or offering a place to stay. Almost all of the backpackers who had experiences hitchhiking also noted that the locals had offered to stop so they could take pictures and really experience the sights. As such, hitchhiking then acted as a separate context for these encounters of kindness to occur.

Furthermore, while in many of the backpacker stories, the locals may have been travelling in the same direction, or it was not a big commitment to ask to join them at a bar, there was still a social engagement aspect to these encounters, and it was clear though the subsequent conversations that the locals were genuinely interested in forming a social connection. Whether it

was because of similar interests and experiences, or for company on a long trip, or simply just wanting to be nice to them. In reflecting on the overall perceptions of backpacker participants on the motivations of the locals, it is clear that while there is evidence that locals do sometimes feel vulnerable and cautious towards tourists, there can be situations where that caution disappears and is replaced with a sense of openness, acceptance, and trust.

4.3.1.2 Spatial and Environmental Contexts

While social exchange was a common context for encounters of kindness with locals, backpackers also discussed spatial and environmental circumstances as specific contexts for their stories of kindness. When asked to tell their stories of kindness, some of the backpacker participants talked about times during their trip when they received help from a local when they really needed it, whether it was being stuck somewhere, or not having enough food or money. Sarah reflected on her experiences at the end of her hiking trip when she was unable to catch a bus back to the city, and was not prepared to camp for another night; she remarked:

Yeah, there was one quite powerful story for us.. it was when we did the 100km hike from Skogar to Landmanalugar. It went in the middle of the highlands, and we were aware that the buses stopped running already during the middle of our hike. So we were kind of up in the air about whether we would get out of there or not... and we were running out of food, so when we arrived there we had not much food left at all. And we found out that there was no shop or anything, just a little hut with Icelanders in it (laughs) and lots of big, badass cars that were mainly for farmers. And so we were struggling to find a ride to get out of it.. we slept the night and we were really cold and wet. We didn't have much food left, so we were just trying to get out to the nearest petrol station or somewhere we could buy food.

In Sarah's story, it was the being stranded and having to wait that ultimately led to a group locals helping her and offering their support. Similarly, Jonas reflected on being in a situation where he was unprepared for a last-minute hike, and a local woman offered to help him without him having to ask. He stated:

I wanted to go hiking one day and I missed the bus and went to the coffee house, and she was very kind to me. She kind of um asked me if I had enough water with me and all of that stuff and I didn't prepare anything, didn't take water or anything, so she, in that café she had a coca cola bottle, and she just dumped the whole bottle and filled it up with tap water and gave it to me. And provided me with water. It was so nice.

Relatedly, Joshua was put in a similar situation, where he was exhausted from trying to find a way back to the city, and stopped to ask for help. He reflected:

I walked and I tried to hitchhike for the next couple hours and no one stopped. But I wasn't that far from a town and the weather was good. So, it wasn't too far away. And after that, another lady was very kind. When I arrived at the town I was quite tired and a bit exhausted – a little flustered because, as I said I hadn't really hitchhiked before and didn't have a lot of stuff with me preparation wise. I didn't have a tent, so I did find accommodation but I had already paid for some in Reykjavik, so I needed to get back to Reykjavik that day. So I was a bit nervous because I had walked for a couple of hours without anyone stopping. And I thought, oh if this continues.. there's no way I could physically walk back to Reykjavik. So I stopped at this hostel/restaurant, and it was actually meant to be closed for a scientific conference.. But I was so exhausted so I thought I should ask for some help and take a couple of minutes to get my bearings and this elderly lady was just beautiful.. she was really wonderful. I explained, and she jumped on the internet, even though she didn't have her glasses on, and she called someone else because she couldn't really see...but she tried to help me with the bus timetable to get back. And then she explained a little bit about the area and gave me some options because it was a couple hours til the bus came. But she said to me that, you know I'd be able to climb to the top of the mountain that was across the road from where we were in an hour and a half.. and enjoy some really great views. She offered to leave my bag with her so I didn't have to carry such a big backpack up there... and I was a bit nervous because I only had a camelback water system... and I didn't really want to carry it by hand because it's uncomfortable. But I knew that I would need water, because you know.. if something happens or whatever, I'm kind of safety conscious. So she went and emptied a couple water bottles and filled them up for me and let me take them.. And she had a bit of banter too because she used to be a P.E teacher.. So yeah, she was amazing...

Similar to these situations of getting stuck or being unprepared, backpacker participants also described Iceland's unpredictable weather as a common context leading to their encounters of kindness. Because the country is so small and sparsely populated, some backpackers found themselves underestimating nature, and getting stranded in isolated regions without

transportation in cold or rainy weather. For example, Lucas discussed his experiences hitchhiking in bad weather in a more isolated region where a local man picked him up after a few hours of waiting. He reflected:

I waited two hours and thirty minutes, and it was really cold outside. I started to freak out a bit. But he took me on the ride to Reykjavik, and he actually showed me around”

Similarly, Joshua also discussed the role that weather had played on his experiences hitchhiking, stating:

it was getting dark and I thought I'd play a bit on people's sensibility... so I wore shorts on purpose because it was getting cold... and I thought that if people saw me with shorts on and it's freezing cold, it would compel them to stop and give me a lift. So another couple did. And this lady was absolutely wonderful... And the second couple, had told me that like literally I was in the middle of nowhere (laughs), and the distances were quite quite far to any town from where I was. But yeah, they were really lovely.

Related to spatial and environmental circumstances or contexts, another perception of host motivations that emerged from the backpacker's stories was the idea of responsibility, or sense of duty to help tourists in their country. Iceland is known for its harsh and unpredictable weather, so in situations where backpackers were stuck outside or in an emergency, they attributed the local's motivations to help to more of an obligation or sense of duty because of the country's harsh climate. For example, Lucas discussed one of his experiences hitchhiking, stating:

They had this picture of me maybe. I was alone on the side of the road, and it was cold outside... and I was shaking. I kind of faked it because I wanted them to take me.. But I don't know... for example, it was because the woman told the man, because her child hitchhikes also in Asia. And she said... 'I wouldn't want them to stay here on the side of the road, so I'm doing the same'.

The inherent responsibility of locals was also clear in Sarah's story, when she expressed:

I mean we all understand it's good to help each other out... but I guess when you are a small population where elements rule, not humans... you have to really help each other. You know?

Relatedly, Matt believed that local motivations for picking up hitchhikers stemmed from Iceland's long history of hitchhiking, and how in the past it was necessary to pick someone up, when some areas of the ring road were extremely isolated. He commented:

In the past, it was like if someone drove by a hitchhiker in Iceland.. it's more like you sent them to death. Because it could be that there's no other car for the next hours, and if they're standing on the road, then you would have to pick them up.

It is clear from the above examples that the backpackers' spatial position or situation ultimately led to their encounters of kindness with locals. From their perspectives, this was also tied to the locals' sense of duty or responsibility due to the country's harsh environment. Even though they might have been unprepared or ignorant regarding bus times and bringing appropriate equipment, the locals still did not hesitate to help them.

4.3.1.3 Temporal Contexts

When asked to describe their stories of kindness, many of the backpacker participants emphasized that they had more than just one story to share, because they had experienced so many brief, but meaningful moments of kindness throughout their travels in Iceland. In some cases, these brief moments are what essentially enabled certain acts of kindness to occur. Most of the backpacker participants recalled having to stop someone on the street to ask for directions, or needing to quickly ask someone a question at a grocery store, and how that short window of time basically became the context for kindness. Some participants mentioned that although these moments were brief and maybe not as memorable as other encounters of kindness they experienced, they still recognized the generosity and support received from Icelanders, even if

they did not have time to learn their names or hear their stories. These feelings were exemplified by David's statement when he expressed:

Like the people who would pick us up... it's just brief moments.. but you're just so grateful to complete strangers who did something without expecting something in return".

This comment by Nate, also expresses his short encounters with locals while hitchhiking to Akureyri. He explained that many of the people who had picked him up were traveling alone and often going in the same direction:

We were hitchhiking from Reykjavik to Akureyri, and kind of the astonishing thing about it, is that we really only waited maybe maximum fifteen minutes throughout the whole thing. So, we had three lifts, and all three times it was really, really quick to get a lift. And... it's not like.. umm.. They.. the people who gave us lifts were... quite accommodating in like where they could drop us off, and answering any questions about the local area, and just you know.. asking us about what it's like where we come from as well.

This idea of brief moments of kindness, and being in the same place at the same time was also expressed in Joshua's story when he discussed his experiences receiving help from a few different locals while on a bus, he reflected:

The bus driver I knew definitely wasn't born here, he was definitely immigrated. I could see and hear that right away and I'm pretty good at that.. But saw that I've been backpacking, knew that I spoke English. We got to the end of the line and we turned back. I got a little bit worried so I put some trust in him seeing me there looking out the window, looking a bit flustered. And actually I stopped when a girl got on board, and I just assumed that her being young she probably spoke English. So I asked her, and she probably would have been about fifteen or sixteen, good looking girl. And I really got a bit nervous because I didn't know who else to ask. And she went above and beyond right there and then. Told me that I was crazy for trying to hitchhike back from the golden circle, just because of the distance and how far I would have to walk. And she went, got up off her seat and when to the bus driver to tell him where I was going, where the best place was to stop. She sat back down, and then he drove past the stop.. so she had to press the buzzer and called out to him, you know 'he needs to get off the bus' So we stopped there, and she let me go back.

Joshua explained that he had to get off the bus right away so he was unable to really thank the girl or learn her name, but that he was so grateful for that brief encounter, and very thankful that the girl had been there on the bus with him.

While many of the backpackers chose to focus on more significant or involved encounters when telling their stories, it is important to note that almost everyone had these brief moments, where the temporality of the moment is what ultimately led to the encounter of kindness.

4.3.2 Host Perceptions

When eliciting their specific stories of kindness from host participants it was also important to determine what had ultimately enabled these encounters to take place, and to explore what had motivated them individually to demonstrate kindness. After describing the context of their stories, host participants were asked what had led to each encounter, and what their main motivations were in these situations. The three common themes related to motivations and circumstances across host stories were temporal, social/cultural, and spatial/environmental contexts for enabling acts of kindness to occur.

4.3.2.1 Temporal Contexts

In discussing the contexts of their encounters of kindness, the most common circumstances or motivations discussed by host participants were those very brief and temporary encounters with tourists where they would quickly give directions or point something out to them – the simplicity and temporality of the task or question ultimately allowing or motivating them to be able to help out. Some host participants noted that they did not always have time to stop and converse with tourists, or have enough space to host couchsurfers or pick up hitchhikers; so for

many, it was those brief encounters that stood out in memory when they were asked to think about kindness.

When asked to talk about his own encounters of kindness, Aron discussed how he often stops by the weekly CouchSurfing meetings held at a coffee shop in Reykjavik, meant for both tourists and hosts to come together to share information and network. Aron mentioned that he would love to actually host Couchsurfers because accommodation is so expensive in the city, but stated,

I go to the couchsurfing meetings because that's about all that I have time for. Trying to help them out with discounts and rides and whatever I try to give some info, or help out with some discounts, discounted car rentals, horse rentals, bus tours, and a few more things. So that's about what I do".

Relatedly, Markus explained that he meets many tourists everyday through his work as a guide, but he also tries to lend a hand to people he comes across needing directions or assistance. He commented:

Apart from job related in the working hour, you know there are endless times where people have come to me in the street, and asked me "where is this place" or when they're holding a map, and they're looking up in the air"

Aron also shared this sentiment of always being willing to spare a few minutes to assist someone needing help. He remarked:

I mean, of course... even if I walk on the street and I see people that are looking on a map or something, I try to... and I think most people would do this... I try to point out and help them to see where to go and stuff...

Viktor also noted how common it was for him to meet tourists in the street, and quickly answer questions or point something out to them. While these experiences have all been very positive, he noted, he shared that it was hard to think of one specific time because it happens so often, stating:

To me it all seems so boring. Of course I've helped people when they've asked for directions. But you get used to doing that in this town. You get used to people asking you to look at a map in a weird corner of the city.

While most of the host participants were able to discuss times where their encounters with tourists were brief, but also talk about experiences where their encounters were more involved, Alexa mentioned that her interactions with tourists have only been very brief and her relationships with tourists have only been short-lived.

As described in the above situations, it is apparent that these short and brief encounters are quite common in many of the host participants' day-to-day lives. This offers some sense that while some encounters may be more involved or complex, circumstances that ultimately enable encounters of kindness to occur do not need to be lengthy, and that brief instances like those discussed above can certainly be positive, memorable, and even impactful.

Although these brief encounters were very common in the host participants' stories, another perspective related to temporality was that greater involvement and more time spent between hosts and tourists can also act as a context or circumstance enabling encounters of kindness to occur. A common theme in some host stories was that some encounters of kindness spanned over a longer amount of time, and required more involvement and commitment than some of the more brief encounters like providing directions or answering questions. Some of the host participants that had hosted Couchsurfers or invited tourists that they had met to stay or travel with them, had emphasized the amount of time they spent for each encounter, and how it was very different from a simple greeting on the street. For example, Emma talked about hosting Couchsurfers, and that the amount of time they stay with can range from one day to one week, and depending on how long they stay will dictate her overall involvement with them. She reflected:

Oh! Where to begin? Wow. Well, most of the time I'm hosting people... And as a host, it's really nice.. people really appreciate all the tiny things that you do. And that's the amazing thing. And for some reason, the people that I have met that have been so open, friendly. They want to talk, they want to do stuff. Just to go downtown, look around... I can point out the things that I know. I've only lived here for two years, so I don't know everything, but just the strange random facts that I can tell... sharing a laugh, going out for dinner just to hear their stories and actually be able to listen to their stories... And like the same when I'm downtown.. someone has a big map and wants directions.. it's not that I run up to every tourist that I see and ask what I can do for them... but if they're struggling, then of course! And I've taken people to the golden circle, and yeah...

Similarly, Tristan who also frequently hosts visitors from the couchsurfing community prefers hosting people who plan on staying at least a few days, so he can really get to know them and show them specific places in his city. He mentioned a few times where he actually planned camping and hiking trips based on when he was having Couchsurfers stay with him, so they could explore some of Iceland together. He reflected:

So I prefer to have the people who, will be staying a few days and then we can do something interesting. When it comes to that, sharing a few days.. meaning I will be helping them with... 'where you want to go? I'm a guide, I know Iceland like the back of my hand. Where do you want to go, what do you want to do...

While the experiences discussed above indicate the host having planned to have people stay with them and planned to show them around, a few host participants mentioned that their encounter of kindness only occurred *after* getting to know the visitor, or after spending a few days with them. For example, Alexa talked about meeting some backpackers at the hostel she works at, and after a few days getting to know them, her and her friends decided to show them around their city. She commented:

Yeah, we took four Canadian guys from the hostel and we showed them around the town, took the whole night.. and we ended up going home at 4am. Because we showed them a lot. We drove through and showed them our secret spots... Like this place where there are swings in the middle of random forests and stuff like that. And they said that was the coolest experience they had in Iceland so far.

This also alludes to the notion of time, and having spent time getting to know the backpackers motivated Alexa to want to spend more time showing them something that was important to her, which ended up being an important aspect of their travels overall.

As has been made clear in this section, in both the brief encounters and encounters where hosts have spent more time or have been more involved, temporality is what ultimately allowed or enabled these encounters to take place. Conversely, the following section discusses space and environment as specific contexts and circumstances for enabling encounters of kindness to occur.

4.3.2.2 Social and Cultural Contexts

While not as common of a context as temporal circumstances and motivations, host participants also described social and cultural circumstances as factors enabling such encounters to occur. When discussing how some of their encounters of kindness came to be, a common theme in some of the host participants' stories was that their initial interactions with tourists took place in social settings. For example, both Emma and Henry mentioned that they enjoy hanging out in the popular tourist spots to meet and interact with different people, and they often end up asking people they meet to join them for coffee or drinks; or through casual conversation with the visitors they meet, they provide recommendations or travel advice. Relatedly, Karl revealed that there have been a few times where he has met people at the weekly CouchSurfing meetings and ended up traveling around the country with them, or acting as their tour guide at sights he is familiar with. Jon spoke about an experience he had while working in the highlands, and after meeting a group of travelers who were rafting near his cabin, he decided to invite them in to hang out, he stated:

They came over one night and spent the night. And then they went down in a raft... Some friends of theirs came over, and I guess maybe the kindness there was that we were so surprised to see somebody come walking over here. Or they were skiing on their skis, and came skiing down. So we really wanted to hear their

stories. So as I recall, we invited them in and gave them a beer, because we just wanted to talk to the three of them.

Conversely, Emma discussed a time when she had picked up hitchhikers, and how the act of hitchhiking itself is an excellent way for her to meet and interact with new people, as it provides an immediate social setting; she stated:

I always pick up hitchhikers when I see them and when I have space. Once I was driving for five hours from Reykjavik to Akureyri and I picked up a girl from Russia.. then like two minutes after I picked her up, I was still in Reykjavik.. and there was a couple from Czech Republic... so I filled up my car with them, and it was really nice to hear stories, recommend stuff for them to do in Reykjavik. Umm yeah, and I've done it numerous times.. to pick up hitchhikers... especially when I'm going to a place I know. Like Akureyri in the north... I was kind of raised there... I know that place like the back of my hand, so I dropped them off, took them around the town when we got there.. showed them the best places to eat, and where the campsite was. And just gave them my number so they could contact me if there was anything while I was staying there. So yeah, I mean I try do these things. It's the same as with my couch – when it's free, of course anyone can use it. And when I'm driving somewhere, of course I would pick them up.

Emma mentioned that she made it a common practice to pick up hitchhikers when she had space, and through conversation with the people she picked up ultimately led her to show them around and provide them with recommendations and support. In relation to Emma wanting to meet new people through hitchhiking, other host participants also discussed social engagement as another common motivation for kindness. Some host participants described this as just wanting to have a “different day” through meeting and interacting with new people, or to have company if they were travelling alone. When sharing his experiences as a CouchSurfing host, Henry talked about just wanting to have people around, and wanting to experience new things. He shared:

I'm very sociable, like having people around. I like meeting new people and new friends. So I thought it was a great way just to have people around, and I was very chilled about it...I only had good experiences.

Also discussing her motivations for hosting international travelers through CouchSurfing, Emma shared how different each experience was with each person she hosted, describing each encounter as a journey. She reflected:

It's like traveling without traveling. That's the great thing. I would love to be traveling my whole life, I would do that for a living if that would be possible.. But when I have to be at home, it's like a journey, each person.. even if it's just for one night or a whole week. The longest time that I've hosted.. they were identical twins from Australia that stayed with me for a week. They were bartenders, so they were making all kinds of drinks and stuff, and teaching me that. I've had photographers, and people who were making a documentary about Iceland came to me and were showing me how they do their work. Yeah, and also just like .. I'm a people person, I just love listening to people, so I have so many stories that I've heard. Just sharing a laugh.. looking around and going on tours around Iceland.. I've seen it a million times, but I always... when you're with a new person, it's a new thing.

Other hosts also noted how they enjoyed taking visitors to see different sights and attractions, because they were able to share aspects of their own culture, and also experience the same things from new perspectives. This also speaks to the size of country; in many of the small towns, it is easy for the locals to point out who the visitors are, as they know almost everyone in their community. Alexa shared various stories of meeting tourists in the small city she lives in, and wanting to show them around and get to know them, to really make the best of their experience.

She commented:

I kind of was just curious about where people are from and why they decided to come here, what they're doing.. and how long they're staying. Just trying to be nice in general, like.. you know – they asked about my recommendations, so it just felt nice helping them out, trying to make the best of their experience here in Iceland.

Tristan also echoed this sentiment when he discussed some of the benefits of being a CouchSurfing host, he reflected:

Most of the time I think it's more about... it's not that much about the physical thing, it's more about... enjoying the moment in a way. Uh, I don't see more than that, why do you couch surf except for gaining intelligence... immaterial goods.

You're not doing couch surfing to collect money, you do it for the experience, the story, the anecdotes. That's why.

Aside from just wanting to meet and engage with new people, many of the host participants also discussed the notion of paying it forward, or having been in a similar situation, and really wanting to show the same generosity that they had experienced in the past. When discussing his motivations for picking up hitchhikers, Aron commented:

Well it's just.. both the company as well as.. I know how it is to be hitchhiking and not getting a lift. Maybe, even though it's very easy to get a lift in Iceland. It's no problem.

Similar to Aron's experiences of knowing what it was like to not get a ride, Tristan also reflected on his motivations for picking people up:

Because I know what it's like to be lost. On my travels. And I always pick up hitchhikers if I can. Oh yeah, I've done that a lot myself.. so I know the story behind that".

Marcus also talked about the notion of "paying it forward", when discussing why he decided to post online to see if any tourists wanted to have coffee or sit down and talk about their travels with him, he described:

I remember I did it three or four times or so, and it was kind of random. Just threw up an advertisement you know "does anyone want to meet up?" And yeah, it was.. they kind of came to me, rather than me... maybe I approached them as well. It was just an advertisement I put on the forums for Reykjavik. I had a feeling I had to give back a bit, from when I was receiving a similar experience abroad. So maybe that was one part of the feeling. And then second, sometimes you just need a different day; that's maybe another.

Relatedly, when sharing his stories about working in the Highlands and some of the encounters he had with hikers and cyclists, Jon discussed the term "trail angel", which he had learned from his experiences hiking in the United States, describing it as someone you meet during your journey that provides you with something small that ultimately makes a big impact on your experience. He reflected:

I did a cycling touring trip last summer, for like forty days. And I got really excited when I saw the one and only cyclist this summer come up here. So I demanded of my coworker who was with me then – because I met quite a few trail angels through my travels in North America...So I demanded that we would only charge him for staying at the campsite, but let him stay inside (laughs). Because, yeah.. I felt that I owed that, at least that much karma, that I wanted to be especially nice to him.... I had a feeling for it, especially for people who are cycling or hiking... That, if you're traveling by car or living in a hut, the small things that give a glimpse into regular life, it really, really makes them so happy so fast. Giving them a shower, giving them a beer. Something that is a luxury that they usually haven't been using.

While not an explicit reason for helping a tourist, trust was also discussed as an inherent part of host interactions with tourists, as it ultimately played an important role in these encounters of kindness. Many host participants noted how important trust is in Iceland, as everyone is so closely connected, and communities are very tight-knit and inclusive. Some hosts discussed how the trusting nature of Icelandic locals automatically extends to tourists. When reflecting on his experiences as an expat when he first moved to Iceland from Australia, Viktor stated:

Trust is a major, major thing in this country. Remember, this isn't America...Trust is a very, very huge thing here. And maybe it's also because it's such a small country. You can't do anything without being noticed. There's, you know... you can't blame it on anybody else.

Viktor also noted that while trust is definitely inherent in Iceland's culture, he hoped it would not change as more people visit each year and the population becomes much larger. Relatedly, Marcus described how easy it is to trust people in Iceland, regardless if they are a local or tourist, and how the country already has a reputation for being extremely safe. He commented:

That's the thing.. here in Iceland, you of course always believe in your own powers and no one can do your thing better than you yourself, but the thing with trust comes with being in the safest country in the world. You know, I don't mind leaving my phone on the table in a restaurant while I go to the bathroom. You know?

Regardless of their previous experiences, and regardless of what they got out of these encounters, every host participant discussed social engagement or this notion of inherent trust as a major part of their story and as main motivation for interacting with visitors. Even in situations where they were just giving directions or answering a question, there was never any hesitation to engage with visitors. Engagement with visitors was something the host participants definitely appreciated, which indicates that there may be strong desire for host-tourist interaction among Icelandic locals.

4.3.2.3 Spatial and Environmental Contexts

Because of Iceland's unique geographical features and unpredictable climate, many host participants also recalled having to help a tourist because of various spatial and environmental circumstances, feeling almost a sense of duty because they are local. When telling their stories of kindness, a few of the host participants noted having to help someone in an emergency on at least one occasion, whether they had experienced car trouble, or were unprepared while hiking or camping. Four of the host participants were currently, or had previously been outdoor adventure guides, and had all mentioned having to assist tourists who came to Iceland unprepared for the various landscapes and climates they would be hiking in. Tristan recalled numerous times he had been hiking personally, and had come across someone who needed help, he commented:

Many, many times... Every time I was going guiding, I would see groups with difficulties. The problem is, people think, because you have once been hiking in the highest hill at home, you can do 50 kilometers hike in Iceland.

Tristan elaborated on the prevalence of these encounters, stating:

Well when you see someone in trouble, it's a natural reaction of anyone, you help them and not let the person die. It's not that you are, it's just... I was guiding people, and it was more like a job. I was paid to guide 15 people in safety from A to B. So meeting people in trouble means that I had to do it. It's also embedded into the act itself and in the nature of people. So for me it was not something I was professionally compelled to do, I was doing it because it had to be done.

Weather was also a common context for a few of the stories of kindness told by host participants. Henry and Aron both recalled having to pick up hitchhikers who were stranded in a storm, and Karl remembered letting a tourist from Spain borrow some of his warm clothes when an unexpected snow storm hit. Similarly, Viktor talked about an instance where a group of girls had rented a car from him and eventually needed to get help from another local man during a snow storm. He reflected:

They got about an hour and a half out of Reykjavik and a very massive storm hit. They actually couldn't drive, and they had to stop the car. They even stopped on the road because they couldn't see past the hood of the car. And a very big 4wheel drive came the other way and thankfully saw them. It was a local couple, and basically the guy said, "ok, this storm is going to be around for at least a day, so you guys aren't going anywhere" so he took their car, and the wife took them in the 4 wheel drive, and they just spent the weekend at the farm. And they said they had a much better time at the farm than they would have had at some random road trip..

Viktor proceeded to note how common this type of situation was, and how important it is to help out, stating:

But you know, if ... people are, if people don't have the facilities to help themselves. If there's a genuine emergency, people here won't think twice. This country is a very bitter country, especially in winter time.

To some extent this relates to the notion of responsibility, as many of the host participants felt a certain sense of duty to assist visitors in certain situations, as Viktor's comment aptly illustrates. Some hosts whom expressed this sentiment felt that because they were Icelanders and had a strong understanding of the culture and environment, it was their responsibility to assist someone who did not have this understanding. Viktor attributed this to it being inherent in their culture and passed on from times when the roads were more isolated and dangerous. He stated:

That's what you do in this country. You always, if you see someone broken down... especially someone on a mountain pass. You have to stop and find out,

because this is simply a relic from the old days. There might be only two cars in the night, and if someone's broken down out there, they could be in real trouble. And I think this is a nice thing that has kind of continued on.. and people here always look out for other people. And you know, even if it's a stupid tourist doing something stupid. A local will still stop and pull them out of whatever they've done. In my car rental, I've had endless stories of people like sneaking down a road that they shouldn't have... and then they just went to the next farm and had to get a tractor to pull them out, and it was no trouble. There's always help very close by. And in that respect, the Icelanders... they're not going to discriminate between Icelanders and foreigners – if someone needs help, they're going to do it.

Tristan also echoed Viktor's response, stating that many people come to Iceland are not prepared for the climate and weather, and do not have the knowledge to get out of certain situations. He said that while he does enjoy some interaction with visitors, helping people in trouble has become repetitive. When discussing his motivations for helping stranded tourists, he commented:

Because, well you have to. If you say, you know nothing about Iceland.. so I can come and shine and explain where to go and what to do. And...well when you see someone in trouble, it's a natural reaction of anyone, you help them and not let the person die... It's also embedded into the act itself and in the nature of people. So for me... I was doing it because it had to be done.

The above examples not only illustrate how often these types of situations occur, but these specific host participant stories also demonstrate that these types of situations almost always enable encounters of kindness to occur because of the severity and intensity of Iceland's geography and climate. Overall, important to take note of these circumstances and motivations and also how they may change over time, especially in a country with a constant growth in tourism.

4.3.3 Section Summary

This section provided insight into what circumstances and motivations enable encounters of kindness to occur within the specific context of Icelandic tourism. From the backpacker perceptions, it was clear that social engagement was an important factor in many of their stories of kindness, whether it was out of engagement that the encounter occurred, or that engagement

was the host's reasoning or motivation behind initiating the encounter. Social and cultural contexts were also featured in host participant stories, as an important motivation for Couchsurfing or picking up hitchhikers was the notion of meeting new people.

Temporal contexts were featured in many of the host participant stories as a specific context enabling encounters of kindness. This seemed to be because of how common it was to briefly engage and interact with tourists on the street, and how many hosts find themselves quickly providing directions or answering questions. Similar situations of temporality were also noted by backpacker participants. Conversely, time was also discussed by hosts as a factor in encounters that happened after a certain amount of time spent. For example, spending time with the backpacker or tourist allowed them to be more involved, and therefore more willing to demonstrate kindness.

The last main theme related to circumstances and motivations was spatial and environmental contexts. These contexts were clear in both host and backpacker stories wherein there was some kind of emergency due to climate or weather. One commonality across both groups was the feeling of responsibility that locals often have to help tourists in certain situations, and that this seems to be inherent in locals due to the climate and harsh weather.

Now that encounters of kindness – and what enables them to occur – have been thoroughly discussed through the perspective of both backpacker and host participants, it is time to come full-circle and explore how participant stories of kindness ultimately counteract cultural vulnerability in tourism situations. The following sections discuss outcomes of participant encounters of kindness, exploring the notion of *third space*.

4.4 How Kindness Counteracts Vulnerability

For this study to be able to effectively come full-circle in its exploration of encounters of kindness and their ability to act as a *third* space in Icelandic tourism contexts, it was necessary to examine how these encounters specifically counteract or alleviate vulnerability. Through analyzing participant stories and subsequent interview conversation, it is clear that while notions of vulnerability do exist within the context of Icelandic tourism, there is potential for mutual cultural understanding and the development of relationships that move beyond or disregard the distinct host and tourist roles.

The following sections explore specific outcomes from participant stories of kindness related to the alleviation of cultural vulnerability. Outcomes uncovered in backpacker stories related to uncovering vulnerability include learning, sharing and understanding; seeing them as a person, rather than just a host; as well as the potential for the durability of encounters characterized by kindness. Very similar to backpacker outcomes, the host perspective also explores outcomes related to improved cultural understanding and changing perceptions through interaction, as well as how relationships established through encounters of kindness can continue to be developed and sustained.

4.4.1 Backpacker Perceptions

When hearing the stories of backpacker participants, it was important to get a sense of the overall outcomes of their encounters, and to assess how these outcomes relate to previously expressed notions of vulnerability. The three main themes related to counteracting vulnerability across backpacker stories were that encounters enabled mutual learning, sharing, and understanding; their encounters providing them with the ability to see the local as more than just a host; and the potential for relationship durability beyond the initial encounter of kindness.

4.4.1.1 Learning, Sharing, Understanding

As discussed previously in section 5.1, notions of cultural vulnerability were clearly present in many of the backpackers' stories. Outside of their main stores of kindness, many backpacker participants communicated various feelings of felt or perceived difference, alienation, or division experienced during their travels in Iceland. However, most of those who did experience these notions of vulnerability were also able to share instances where those feelings or perceptions did not exist, or were changed based on specific interactions of kindness they had with Icelandic hosts. Regardless of their previous experiences during their time in Iceland, all of the backpacker participants discussed how their encounters of kindness with locals ultimately shaped or changed their overall experience. Some participants discussed how certain interactions allowed them to bridge certain cultural gaps, and to be able to learn more and be more accepting of Iceland's culture and people.

When reflecting on their stories of kindness and what they took away from those experiences overall, all of the backpacker participants noted the immense impact that these small and simple acts of kindness had on their ability to learn and understand where the local people are coming from. For example, Joshua expressed how much the generosity he received on his first day in the country meant to him, and how it completely shaped his travel experience based on what he was able to learn and experience through his encounters. He shared:

I got to a place that I probably wouldn't have heard about without the first lady. I got to see an area that would have cost me about \$160 on a bus to go and see. And I got to learn more than I would have learned on a bus because it happened to be a geologist that picked me. So that definitely altered my trip, in a big way. Because, I really didn't have much expectation when I left on that day, and I just had come off the back of a long journey of walking, and I actually had just really not had much of a plan of things to see in Iceland, and I think the general cost of the trip when I got here, and the days leading up trying to book accommodation had sort of landed on me.. and I actually thought I'd just be happy walking around, and just being outside with beautiful landscapes, and watch mother

nature do her thing... And just keep walking, but that first day, everything completely changed because I saw and did so much more in that one day than I thought I could. Literally, when I got home that night, I went out with one guy from Iceland and a couple travelers, and I really couldn't believe I had done so much in one day. And yeah. It changed everything actually...It's definitely going to be one of the highlights of my trip.

Relatedly, Jonas also reflected on how a certain encounter with a local completely changed and improved his overall understanding of what it is actually like to live in Iceland. He stated:

We were talking about how rough it is to live here and stuff, and I always thought 'okay, they're used to it and they get along with it very good' but I asked him if he likes the winter and he said 'oh, you have to like winter otherwise you can't live here. It's hard' ... and you know they have financial struggles as well, especially after the financial crisis, but they're doing their best....

Though this idea of learning more about the culture and people through local encounters was reflected in many of the backpackers' stories, some participants talked about how they felt more cohesion and balance through discussing and sharing information and examples regarding their own cultures and countries. Lucas referred to this a "cultural exchange" when he stated:

I told them about my culture to compare, to... not to teach, but just to exchange. Just to compare some cultures and to see...not to see if one is better than the other, because that can't be I think...but just to talk... to open my mind, and theirs.

Similar to Lucas's experience with cultural exchange and opening your mind to new or different points of view, Serena talked about her time discussing and sharing aspects about her culture in Spain:

They asked me if in Spain it's different, and like, wanted to know how it is in other places – what they believe, and the daily... the day-to-day experiences. They really wanted to know how it is in other countries.

These experiences and encounters not only allowed for backpackers to develop new perspectives and a fuller understanding of Icelandic culture, but it also allowed them to feel more comfortable engaging with Icelanders. For instance, Joshua reported feeling more comfortable

speaking with local people in English after an encouraging experience with a local at a hostel bar where he was able to share his insecurities and learn more about the people and their perceptions and expectations of tourists. He stated:

Because of the positive engagement, and the positivity and friendly nature, it's made me feel a lot more comfortable with engagement. It sort of made me feel... like I understood them, and that I was on par... so I could engage with them regardless.

Similarly, the experiences of learning and cultural understanding that some participants had, made them reflect on how they act or would like to act towards visitors in their home countries. Some participants expressed that even the small gestures such as giving directions or advice, or developing a connection with someone over a coffee or beer can make such a difference with cultural understanding and connection. Nico exemplified how important these simple experiences or connections can be on the host-tourist relationship, stating:

So this connection – even if it's just for one day, or even just a few hours – it could be the moment which you remember at one point where you say “I learned from a lot of people, I experienced a lot of stuff... and I didn't just experience a country, I experienced people living in that country” and in a way this is much more important than the country itself.

In some of these stories of engagement and the subsequent learning and understanding that took place, it was clear to a lot of the backpackers that the people they interacted with were a lot like them, and often had similar experiences. Sarah and David referred to this simply as “humanness”. Where in the moment, cultural difference, division, or the barriers that we inherently put up do not have to exist, as Sarah stated, “in the moment, of course not. It's human just to be”.

4.4.1.2 Seeing Them as People

Tied to the notion of humanness, another common theme in backpacker stories was the idea that these encounters enabled them to see the *other* as a person. This theme was apparent in

participant stories where they discussed really needing help, and when a local did not even hesitate to offer support or kindness. Backpackers also reflected the notion of seeing them as a ‘person’ through some of the ways in which they showed appreciation and gratitude for the local’s kindness.

In addition to sharing stories where she received kindness from locals, Sarah also discussed some situations where she was able to provide support to them. She expressed that we should help people regardless of who they are, and that it should feel natural and human, stating:

It’s a completely natural thing, but it seems unnatural because it’s so infrequent and because we’re used to this lack of trust. Like, we don’t trust anyone... but it’s such a natural thing that you would help someone. It’s so small.

In discussing the acts of kindness he experienced, Nico also recognized that we should not expect help just because we are in their country, and that it is important to treat people as people. He expressed:

It really doesn’t matter where you come from. Maybe we have a different surrounding or cultural standpoint. But that doesn’t mean anything.

This notion of being able to see the locals as a person regardless of where they come from was also exemplified in stories where they really got to know an individual on a personal level. Reflecting on his experiences hitchhiking and subsequently spending hours getting to know a local man during the ride, Matt remarked, “*you can really get in contact with the people and speak with them to really experience that this is a real human*”. The benefit of really getting to know the person was also apparent in Nico’s reflections of an experience of getting to know a local woman and hearing about certain aspects of her life, when he stated:

People are dealing with stuff in other countries and cultures that’s different from our cultures, and that’s interesting. How people are dealing with stuff, dealing with... this girl for example was talking about a lot of stuff going on in her life. And she was talking about how she recently left her boyfriend, but she has a daughter who is one year old, and she told us all of this stuff, and it was quite

nice. I know people like that in Germany, but it's different here. And I like the perspective, to hear that story. Put it like a story which can happen to everyone, and be in every country, and it's just a story... It's not just a story, it's the people behind the story and how they're telling it, and how they're feeling about it. She was quite open about that and I really appreciated it. And so, there's this moment where you share your experience, and your history, your own history with people, just for the sake of it – of having a conversation – but it's also for the sake of letting someone be part of your history, and you being a part of other people's history.

As Nico described, this mutual sharing and understanding really allows the person to become a part of your history and vice versa – ultimately creating a space of cohesion and balance.

For some backpacker participants, it was also important to express how much they appreciated the local's act of kindness so that it did not feel like it was assumed or expected because of their role as a local or *host*. For example, when Lucas was hitchhiking, he wanted to make sure his appreciation for the person was known as soon as he got in their car. He reflected:

I thanked them. Yeah, I don't know.. I said a lot of thank you's, 'thank you thank you, you saved my trip, you're my saviour!' Especially for the old man. When I got into the car for the first time, I said 'you are my saviour! I'm getting back to civilization, thank you!'

Similarly, Nate expressed how with his hitchhiking experiences, he wanted to express his appreciation throughout the whole trip, to ensure the local knew how much it meant that they were helping him get somewhere. He reflected:

Gee.. really we just said thanks, heaps. Thank you for stopping, you can drop us off anywhere, you don't need to stop. We tried to take an interest in anything that they had to say, and keep up good conversation even though we were super tired. But... Especially the last woman... Just seeing her so happy that she was helping someone else have a good experience in Iceland. It's hard to put into words exactly how we were showing appreciation, because it's not like we were giving them money or anything like that.. So it was just kind of an ongoing thing while we were driving... And also giving them a sincere thank you. Yeah... I think some of them we shook their hands, and you know... that solid eye contact that means 'thank you so much'..

Serena noted that for some of her hitchhiking encounters, if they were unable to exchange contact information, or the person would not accept money for fuel, thanking them in that brief transition of getting out of their car was her only option to show how much she appreciated their kindness; she noted:

Yeah, we'd say that they were the best, and thank them for taking us. When the car stopped, it's like, I couldn't think, I could never express how much I appreciated that person [laughs].

These examples discussed by backpacker participants confirm that being able to share stories and really show appreciation to them as a person, can ultimately help to create mutual understanding regardless of your culture, background or experiences.

4.4.1.3 Potential for Durability of Encounters Characterized by Kindness

Related to the idea of seeing the *other* as a person, it was also imperative to assess the potential for these encounters to have lasting impacts in the form of relationship-building outside of the initial encounter of kindness, and to assess what that means for fostering *third space*. In reflecting on their stories of kindness, the backpacker participants were asked about what ultimately came out of these encounters. A common theme that held across all of the backpacker interviews was the notion of timing, and how the duration of the encounter had a significant impact on the overall outcome of the relationships between the host and backpackers involved in these stories of kindness. Within this theme of timing was the notion that it was possible to develop connections through these encounters, whether the relationship took a bit of time to develop, or that it really did not matter how long the encounter was, and they were able to develop a bond or connection in a short amount of time.

For some of the backpackers, the connection they felt with the local who had assisted, supported, or that was kind to them, felt like it had happened right away. For example, Joshua

shared his feelings about the almost immediate connection he had with a local photographer after asking him for some travel advice; he reflected:

In such a short period of time, we just had a bond... and it didn't come from hours of conversation, it was just a .. I don't know, like a connection. Like, I really, really wanted to hear more about his journey and his life. He seemed like a really, really interesting person. And normally when you, when I've engaged with people in the past, some people tend to be, when you're younger, sort of asking you questions like, sort of out of sense of duty when you've been engaging. But he seemed to thoroughly enjoy my story, my life's journey so far.. and reasons why I was in Iceland, and had done some of the things I've done in my life over the past couple years. So that definitely helped..

Andrew also discussed how one of experiences hitchhiking with a local man had immediately turned into a sort of friendship, as they ended up sharing a meal, and really opening up to each other in such a short time; later exchanging contact information with a promise to connect again.

Nico also reflected on his experiences connecting with two locals he had met in a bar, and how right away they formed such a strong connection, one that he would definitely remember. He commented:

When there's a genuine interest in each other, and you have this kind of conversation I had with both of these people – it felt so good... to have that conversation. Just to feel good about it. Just saying "okay there's one more person to remember.

Alternatively, some of the participants revealed that they had formed connections with locals, but it was only after a few days or a certain amount of time that the relationship really started to form. Joshua referred to two of the locals he had met during his two weeks as “new friends” and admitted feeling surprised about how quickly these relationships had formed due to his previous experiences engaging with various people, and also from what he had heard from others about the nature and culture of the locals in Iceland. He stated:

It's really interesting because I've heard with Icelandic people, they can be a little bit quiet, or reserved, and then someone from Iceland had told me that it's true, they sort of...well he saw them/their culture as sort of sitting back; and

engaging or interpreting or taking in another person – and based on what they receive will determine how much they give out. And it's funny because since hearing that and reflecting on the people I've met, I've actually seen a lot of truth to that...

Joshua elaborated when he brought up his friendship with another local man he had met and who he had later joined for a camping trip. He reflected on how their relationship evolved over time, stating:

But I noticed with him as well... how our relationship evolved over a couple of days... and the more we got to know each other, the more he opened up...Just because we had more of a chance to do that.

In my own experiences meeting and connecting with locals, I was able to develop some relatively strong bonds that I feel will continue, even if it is a few years before I see them in person again. The following photo (Figure 10), is from my camping trip with Liam (left) and the other travelers who joined us. The six days spent together really allowed us to develop strong connections, and Liam is someone who I continued to meet up with for the remainder of my time in Iceland.

Figure 10: Photo: developing connections with locals and other travelers



Related to these strong connections that some participants formed, was the discussion of methods for keeping in touch. When asked how they have or intend to keep in touch with the people mentioned in their stories of kindness, a lot of the backpacker participants noted that they have exchanged email or social media contact information with the people they met. Some participants noted that unlike the added costs of long-distance calling, or physical mail, there is really no limit to the geographical distance when it comes to communicating via social media. In relation to this, Nico put it aptly:

There's an easy way to do it. Like in our society right now, you always have contact through social media. So I always suggest it, and I always stand by that... And usually I use facebook. I think it's now kind of another way of exchanging numbers... it's a better way because numbers you don't really call unless you're in the country with the same contract, or it's really expensive. So social media is actually helping I guess, to aid in this international feeling of the community of traveling around.

Alternatively, when discussing relationship durability, some participants noted that the relationships derived from their encounters of kindness really only existed in the moment, and that the significance of these brief encounters was that you are able to “live it, and leave it”. When asked if they had tried to keep in touch with one particular local man that had truly shown them unconditional support in a time of need, Sarah and David noted that because of the language barrier and age difference, keeping in touch did not seem attainable, but as David noted, “*but in a way that makes it more precious...*”. Sarah elaborated, noting that this encounter was still quite an important moment for her, and it would still be a memory. She put it aptly:

We didn't keep in touch, but it's quite beautiful... just to have it, and live it... and you leave it. And that's ok. It's out there in the world.

Other participants built on the idea of these relationships solely existing in the moment. As Nico described a few hours that he spent conversing with a local woman, he noted that there was a

connection, but the idea that they would probably never see each other again made him really want to experience his time with her. He reflected:

Maybe it was the fact that I may never see her again...I was concerned in that moment that I wanted to get to know her much more... and It was the same way around.

Nico's experience relates to one of my own personal reflections after getting a ride from Reykjavik to Akureyri with an older woman. We may not keep in touch because of our age differences and where we live, but she's definitely someone I will remember:

Personal Reflection

September 24th / Day 27

I had previously arranged a ride to Akureyri through the online rideshare/carpool website, and this morning Nina picked me up at the campsite. She was going to visit her daughter in Akureyri, and often takes travelers when she goes. Her English was not amazing, but it did not really matter at all. She was so lovely, and always made sure we were warm enough throughout the five-hour drive. She danced along to the music with us and in those moments, it didn't feel like we spoke different languages or had different customs; we were just two people dancing in the car. She made sure to drop me off at the right location and then she went on her way. Although I do have her email, she probably isn't someone I will keep in touch with, but she is definitely someone that I had a connection with and won't forget that five-hour drive with her.

Similarly, when asked if he had formed any connections or relationships during his time hitchhiking with locals, Nate shared that he did not feel it was necessary to stay in touch, but the main connection they do have is the shared story. As he put it:

I think it was more in the moment. I think had we been sharing a car with other backpackers, I think maybe definitely, because there would maybe be a similar age, like not exactly... but I guess maybe they would be more willing to share their full name and details with some hitchhikers. But to answer your question, no.. but I think the main connection we have is that it's an interesting story... not only do I have the story of these people that picked us up and everything they told us.. but they know a little about us too.

Generally, as illustrated in the section, while some participants felt strongly towards working to further develop and maintain these connections and relationships, and others noted

that although they might never see the person again – they noted that there was mutual learning and impact on cultural understanding. While there might not be further contact for all of the participants, they still recognized the connections formed and the outcomes that these encounters had on their overall cultural understanding.

4.4.2 Host Perceptions

In analyzing the host participant stories of kindness, it was important to also gain an understanding of their perceptions of the overall outcomes of these encounters, and how specific outcomes relate to previously expressed notions of vulnerability. The following sections discuss the main themes brought forward by host participants, including the ability for perceptions to change through positive interaction, as well as for the potential to develop strong connections and durable relationships through encounters characterized by kindness.

4.4.2.1 Changing Perceptions Through Interaction

As previously discussed in section 5.1, initial discussions with host participants ultimately revealed feelings of invasion and vulnerability due to tourism and its recent growth. However, through discussing the host participants' encounters of kindness and positive interactions with visitors, it is clear that people are starting to have more positive experiences with tourists as they begin to get used to tourism, and in turn feel more comfortable accepting people into their culture. One main tenet of this positive change discussed by host participants was that tourism interaction is providing locals with the opportunity to learn about different cultures and people. Henry exemplified this opportunity for learning through interaction with other cultures when discussing his experiences as a Couchsurfing host. He reflected:

“I’ve learned a lot. You learn a lot of... about different cultures. Like, you learn a few words in other languages. Which I don’t remember now though.. and yeah definitely. We’re so isolated here... for example, when the first Muslim person that

I met – not that I met, but the first Muslim person I spent an hour drinking beer with – Understanding their situation, their background. It's good for me”.

Henry made the point of clarifying that he did not just meet him, but he really spent time getting to know him – socializing, drinking beer with him – and that it was good for him to be able to gain this new perspective, since his country is so geographically isolated. Similarly, Emma talked about her experiences hosting international Couchsurfers, and what an eye-opening, educating experience it is each time. She commented:

It brings an interesting twist to the conversation of course. They are all different with different backgrounds, beliefs, what they eat, and how they do things... It amazes me to see that, like what is normal to me is not normal to them.

Being able to really get to know and interact with people aside from brief encounters on the streets and in stores, enabled locals like Henry and Emma to broaden their understandings of people, culture, and question the meaning of normalcy that they are so accustomed to. Henry also elaborated on this form of cultural education, acknowledging that these interactions have made him understand the world a little better, he stated:

I met a great guy from New York... He was half American from Africa. He was telling me about his culture, and it opened my eyes and made me understand the world a little better. It opened my eyes and educated me more about different cultures.

Emma also noted that while these encounters of positive interaction may help to alter local perceptions of tourists, it is important to realize that the visiting tourists are also just people. In talking about her experiences with Couchsurfers, Emma expressed how easy it is to see our differences, but that it is also important not to. She stated:

It's different and it's not different. Like the human part is the same...Sitting on a couch listening to music – it doesn't matter if you're from India or Canada. It doesn't matter.

Relatedly, Jon remembered one specific interaction he had with visitors that completely changed his perspective and made him reflect on his own actions. He reflected:

It was so nice to talk to these people. It had been cloudy for, I don't know, like a week, and I was you know, just putting my game face on, wasn't being particularly nice – I wasn't going out of my way or anything, but I was just trying to be polite. And everything I said, they just had such a positive reaction to everything. They just brought me into a, into a better mood. And actually I was talking to, I met two or three rangers also, and I said "yeah I have a couple here from Britain, kind of older, and really nice" and they were like "oh I know exactly who you're talking about" (laughs) Just because, they were just, they just had this beacon of positivity. This aura of being so positive, that it was just kind of amazing. It really made me reflect on my own actions.

In reflecting on his experiences with this couple, Jon noted that it did not feel like there were any cultural differences between them, or that those differences did not matter at the time. They were just enjoying each other's company, which sometimes is overlooked when there are such distinct host and tourist roles.

4.4.2.2 Potential for Durability in Relationships Characterized by Kindness

Connected to the idea of counteracting vulnerability and fostering *third space* through host-tourist encounters of kindness, is the overall outcome of these encounters, and the overall potential for durability in these relationships. Because each host participant had their own unique stories of kindness, the relationship outcomes of these encounters varied.

A common theme discussed among some of the host participants was the idea that it was possible to foster relationships out of these encounters, and by doing so, it allows them to create and develop their own sort of international community of friends and connections around the world. Some host participants expressed that it had been possible for them to develop and maintain relationships from their encounters of kindness, regardless of distance. Many of the host participants noted that while it takes more effort, it is important to them to stay in contact and potentially reconnect with certain people in the future. When talking about his experiences

as a Couchsurfing host, Karl mentioned that he has developed some close friendships with the people who had come to stay with him, with a few of them returning multiple times to visit. He reflected:

Well, yeah, I made good friends, definitely. There have been people that have been coming again after they visited Iceland, so we've been staying in touch and I've met up with them again. So I've definitely made good friends, and also people that I'm planning to visit later, and to meet up with later.

Emma and Henry also mentioned reconnecting with people they had met through their experiences as Couchsurfing hosts, as well as having tentative plans to reconnect with people abroad. They both noted how grateful they were to have contacts all over the world. Emma reflected:

Two friends from California came back to meet me. That was great. They had such a good time, so they wanted to come see me again. Yeah, and I'm planning a few trips, because now I have contacts all over the world – not just Europe, so that's big. So I'm planning a trip to the states, and hopefully doing like an Asia, India tour.. because I have a lot of people there as well. And my first couchsurfer, the first of my couchsurfers is moving to Iceland!. He was with me like a month ago, and he said it was so nice 'it was so nice when you showed me around, and I really like Iceland, and it's so good to have a friend like you, so I'm coming in October with a one-way ticket!'

In regard to staying in touch and maintaining relationships developed through encounters of kindness, a lot of the host participants noted a general consensus in relation to the ability for social media to be used in as a way in which to further develop and maintain these international relationships developed in tourism contexts. For example, when asked about staying in touch with her previous CouchSurfers, Emma responded:

Yes! With most of these people, yeah. But I mean, some it's just like "hey, how are you doing" on Facebook.

Similarly, Henry talked about how he stays in touch with some of the people featured in his stories of kindness, stating:

I'm Facebook friends with most of them, so sometimes I'll like their pictures on Facebook and Instagram... And yeah, so we stay in touch, but we know how it is. We don't call each other or facetime or something like that. It's just happy birthday, and look at pictures and stuff like that. So social media is a big part of it.

Another common point that host participants made when talking about the outcomes of their experiences was that even if they do not end up seeing some of these people again, they have very significant memories of a lot of their experiences. For example, Viktor stated:

Most of the awesome people I do remember, because they left their mark on me. Or on the experience.

Marcus elaborated on this sentiment when discussing his experiences as a tour guide. He reflected:

Yeah I do remember a lot of people. They're the ones that I take time out after... end up going for lunch with, or meet up with someone in the bar. So, yeah. I usually remember those, at least slightly longer. I think I've got a bed to stay in every single country. But I never use it. Sometimes people send me after "thanks for the great tour, thanks for meeting up last night". Sometimes we coincidentally meet again. "by the way great tour, just wanted to tell you to meet up if you're ever in this place". And sometimes they send an email after to back up their opinion.. so it's not just empty words. And then I write "hey, thanks for writing me back. I'm going to put you in a separate folder". So I've got another folder with these memories.

When discussing the outcomes of their stories of kindness, many of the host participants noted that often the outcomes of these encounters result in brief and local relationships – if and when they do stay in touch with the person, it is typically while they are still traveling in Iceland. A common point made by host participants when discussing the outcomes and potential relationships developed from their encounters of kindness was the notion that it is difficult to get to know someone in only a short time, and sometimes you are unable to connect on such a level to ultimately have that durability in the connections you make. For example, both Alexa and Jon noted that for some of their encounters where it involved sharing a beer or exploring a specific

location, there was no real opportunity to exchange information or really get to know them personally because it was such a short encounter. Also sharing this sentiment, Viktor noted:

There are experiences or moments that you would never... when you would never meet the person again. There are many, many, many couchsurfers that I've met for one night, for a few days. For just a beer, and that's it.

Alternatively, Alexa noted that while she may not keep in touch with someone long after they return home, she sometimes exchanges information to keep and touch and reconnect with people while they are still traveling in Iceland, labelling it as more of a local relationship. She reflected:

Yeah, I've met a few people here working at the bar, and went out for drinks and kept in touch with a few. And also when I work at the ski resort... I met a few people there who I ended up going skiing with.

While some noted that they would have liked to stay in touch with the foreigners they met, other host participants saw no interest in putting the effort into developing and maintaining relationships with those who live on another continent. When asked if he has stayed in touch with the people mentioned in his stories of kindness, Tristan put it aptly:

There are some people...but, I see no interest of staying in close touch, in close contact with someone in half the world away. That I'm not going to see in the next five years..

Overall, in assessing the outcomes of their encounters of kindness related to relationship durability, it was clear that timing and duration were determining factors in the durability of relationships formed out of their initial encounters. While not all host participants shared the same sentiment in wanting to further develop and maintain these relationships, many did express the impacts and memories related to these relationships, with some noting that they have reconnected with people - either in Iceland or abroad – and their initial encounters ultimately aiding in the creation of an international community. This also relates back to the idea that more

exposure and positive interaction can lead to further understanding and learning between cultures, hopefully then alleviating feelings of vulnerability related to tourists always being there.

4.4.3 Section Summary

This section outlined a variety of outcomes related to how encounters of kindness can counteract feelings vulnerability, expressed by both participant groups. This section recognized that while these notions of vulnerability do exist within the context of Icelandic tourism, there is potential for mutual understanding and relationships that move beyond or disregard the distinct host and tourist roles.

A significant finding was that both participant groups noted that some of their encounters of kindness ultimately led them to more improved understandings regarding other cultures and people. Most participants noted that through mutual sharing and exchanging stories throughout their encounters, they were able to discover new or different points of view, and that these encounters then became a space of learning and understanding.

Lastly, both participant groups talked about the potential for durability of these encounters. For a large number of participants, relationships had been formed beyond that initial encounter of kindness, suggesting the potential for both brief and local relationships among backpackers and hosts, or more long-lasting international communities.

4.5 Summary of Outcomes

In summary, this chapter presented the overarching themes emerging from interview and observation data. The primary themes of this study included uncovering vulnerability, narrating kindness, circumstances and motivations that enable encounters of kindness, and counteracting vulnerability.

It is worth emphasizing, although perhaps unsurprisingly, that the data provided by each participant group, was not all that different. While the host and backpacker participants varied in terms of cultural backgrounds, experiences, and/or roles in the context of Icelandic tourism, when it came to their overall experiences and outcomes related to kindness, both groups' stories and responses were very similar. When looking at how participants defined kindness, and examining the circumstances and motivations enabling such encounters, participant responses were closely related. Subsequently, both participant groups noted *learning* as a significant positive outcome of social interaction. Backpackers reflected on feeling more comfortable as they began to understand exchange with locals, and hosts noted that interacting with tourists and backpackers enabled them to broaden their understanding of different cultures and in turn open their eyes to new and different experiences and interactions.

Furthermore, the information that has been presented in this chapter is based on analysis of the data gathered through participant interviews and researcher observation. The following chapter will further discuss the findings of this study in light of existing academic literature. It is important to note that while the outcomes in this chapter were represented separately into host and backpacker perceptions, the aim of the following sections is to no longer explicitly distinguish these differences, but to discuss the outcomes of all participants as a whole to further encapsulate the mutuality and balance of a *third space*.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this symbolic interactionist ethnography was to explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts, placing emphasis on understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships. This study was guided by the following research questions:

- What meanings do hosts and tourists ascribe to the intercultural encounters experienced in Icelandic tourism contexts? To intercultural encounters characterized by kindness?
- What circumstances enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships?
- How do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of social or cultural vulnerability?
- How might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships?

Organized based on the four outlined research questions, this chapter aims to further interpret and discuss the main outcomes of this study in connection with relevant academic literature outlined in previous chapters. Overall, the outcomes of this study suggest that a *third space* can exist through encounters of kindness; kindness ultimately acting as a space of balance and cohesion between cultures in tourism. The outcomes of this study also contribute to relevant academic discourses in cultural vulnerability, the host-tourist relationship, and tourism in Arctic Regions.

5.1 Research Question #1

What meanings do hosts and tourists ascribe to their intercultural encounters characterized by kindness?

This section explores the meanings that participants ascribed to their intercultural encounters of kindness. As previously noted in the review of literature, kindness is a topic that has not undergone a breadth of exploration, especially in the field of tourism studies. Thus, as a main research question contributing to the investigation of kindness in Icelandic tourism contexts, it was integral to be able to explicitly define what kindness entails in the context of tourism, and to be able to provide concrete examples from the perspectives of both host and tourist participants. The following sections respond to this initial research question, while connecting back to existing literature, and outlining specific contributions to current gaps within the literature pertaining to kindness, and kindness in a tourism context.

5.1.1 Kindness as a Spectrum

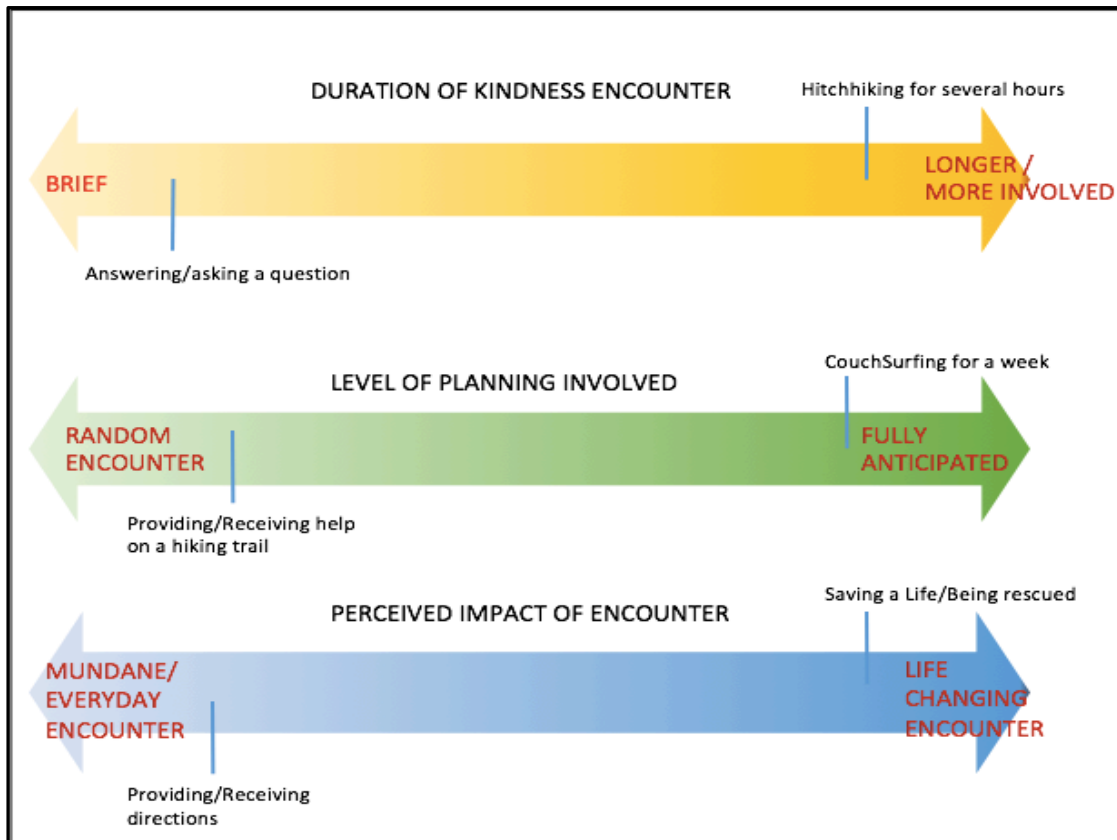
Looking at specific participant stories of kindness has allowed for a deeper understanding of *what* kindness actually means to the participants in this study. From the outcomes outlined in the *Narrating Kindness* section of this thesis, it was clear that there is not one universal definition for kindness, and that it varies for each person and situation. However, in taking a broad look at all of the stories of kindness collected in this study, they all fall under the very broad definition put forward by Otake et al., (2006), who suggested that kindness simply means exhibiting kind behaviour towards others. All of the stories told by the participants in this study involved some variance of positive, uplifting behaviour that they inherently defined as kindness.

Previous quantitative studies, such as those by Otake et al., (2006) and Baskerville et al., (2000), have argued the importance of studying kindness in terms of its contribution to overall

happiness, and the importance of noting how different people react differently to acts of kindness. Wherein those studies the act of kindness exhibited were determined by the research team, this specific study ultimately contributes to our overall understanding of kindness by providing narrative examples of what kindness means, as determined specifically by the research participants.

If one were to take all of the participant stories of kindness from this study and organize them based on the participant's definition of kindness, there would be a very broad spectrum in terms of the duration, planning involved, and perceived impact of the "act" of kindness. As illustrated in figure 11, the participant definitions of kindness can ultimately be divided into these three separate continuums. The first would be the varying durations of the encounters of kindness. For example, some encounters were very brief, including Host Aron and Backpacker Matt's encounters, which involved asking for, or providing advice; in other words, a very simple enactment that they defined as kind behaviour. On the other end of the continuum, one would find definitions of kindness from backpacker Joshua or host Henry, who discussed their experiences hitchhiking for several hours with people whom they had just met.

Figure 11: Kindness as a spectrum



The second arrow or continuum represents the level or degree of planning involved in the encounter of kindness. Many backpacker participants highlighted the notion of “unexpectedness” as a main attribute to their stories of kindness. Often their experiences were not as a direct result of asking or requesting help, and when telling their stories, a primary element that they emphasized was that the particular act of kindness was random or unexpected. Conversely, the opposite end of this continuum represents encounters of kindness that were fully anticipated or planned. Host participant Emma’s stories of hosting couchsurfers in her home adequately represents a high degree of planning and anticipation involved in such encounters.

The last continuum to represent the full spectrum of kindness represented in participant stories was the level of perceived impact of the encounter. For example, many backpacker

participants acknowledged how important it was to them when the host seemed to have gone above and beyond to help them, and this impact became a key aspect illuminated in many of their stories. Conversely, when discussing their stories of kindness, the host participants tended to place significant meaning on whether or not they had made an impact through their act of kindness. For example, some stories told by backpackers featured simple, mundane, or everyday acts that they inherently defined as kind. On the other end of the spectrum, both host and backpacker participants told stories wherein the encounter was life-changing. Overall, it is important to acknowledge that kindness might be interpreted in different ways, especially when looking at how such acts can contribute to cultural understanding between hosts and tourists.

One important finding to note in relation to existing literature, is that every participant story of kindness expressed in this study was regarded as positive. This finding differs from the findings of Baskerville et al., (2006) who found that in some situations of kindness, the receiver of such random acts may feel skeptical towards the person initiating the kindness, because of the perceived “randomness” of such act. While their specific study just focused on one specific act targeted towards a certain number of people, this study looked at a variety of encounters of kindness, and still found that the feelings were nothing but positive across all participant stories. Thus, As the study of kindness in research becomes more significant, it is imperative to have qualitative data that specifically illustrates such a spectrum to accompany the broader understandings of previous studies of kindness (Otake, et al., 2006; Baskerville et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2010; Hamilton, 2010).

5.1.2 Kindness Beyond Hospitality

In some tourism literature, it is noted that hospitality is inherently part of the tourism product being offered, meaning that notions of kindness expressed by hosts towards tourists

might solely be a part of the tourism product (Lashley, 2008; Lashley et al., 2004; Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) reiterated this point, noting that the “the ultimate aim of hospitality is to achieve extremely high level of guest satisfaction and loyalty,” which is sometimes exhibited through acts and gestures of kindness towards guests (p. 192). This seems to be a common point made in the literature in regard to kindness, and might be due to the fact that hospitality is currently the only field of study that specifically situates kindness within the context of tourism (Glover & Filep, 2015).

However, this study explicitly challenges these perceptions. It became clear that the acts of kindness expressed by participants in this study ultimately exist outside of product or exchange of tourism, as almost all of the participant stories discussed within this study occurred outside of tourism business. The meanings that came across through both host and participant stories were less about the travel experience or perceived reputation of Icelanders, and more about the genuine, kind, and altruistic interactions taking place between people. These findings relate closely to those of Telfer (2000) who stated that even in the hospitality industry, hospitable or kind behaviour can also stem from the sole desire to care. Even though the stories elicited in this study focused on host participants helping or acting kind towards guests (similar to what takes place in hospitality), many of the host participants expressed a genuine altruistic concern that evidently extends beyond a tourism product (Poulston, 2015). In other words, there were no motivations to get tourists to return or spend more money, and they were not acting kind to fulfill any sort of promised expectations. Therefore, recognizing kindness in this manner is imperative to be able to acknowledge it as a powerful force of change within tourism relationships.

5.1.3 Kindness and Responsibility

While genuine notions of care towards others were commonly discussed by the host participants as motivating factors in their encounters of kindness, another key element that defined many of the encounters of kindness was the notion of responsibility. The way that host participants referred to responsibility in relation to kindness, ties to how responsibility is described by feminist philosophers Gatens and Lloyd (1999) and geographer Massey (2004), wherein responsibility is relational, unrestricted, and is rooted in history. Many of the host participants felt a sense of duty towards visitors in need, not because of their role as a host, but because of traditions rooted in their past that are now inherent in their present culture. As one participant noted, *“that’s what you do in this country. You always, if you see someone broken down... especially someone on a mountain pass. You have to stop and find out, because this is simply a relic from the old days”*. Similarly, as cited by Massey (2004), beliefs by Gatens and Lloyd (1999) thoroughly encapsulate the perceptions of the host participants related to kindness and responsibility in this study:

“In understanding how our past continues in our present we understand also the demands of responsibility for the past we carry with us. The past in which our identities are formed. We are responsible for the past not because of what we as individuals have done, but because of what we are” (p.81).

For the host participants, it is their previously very isolated environment, unpredictable and harsh climate, and overall history of being tied to the land that motivates responsibility to help those in need, regardless of their place or culture of origin.

Feelings of responsibility – both expressed by host participants and evident in backpackers’ stories of kindness – also emphasized the notions of unrestricted kindness, in that it did not matter where the person was from or who they were. This lends evidence to geographies of responsibility, a concept commonly discussed in geography discourse (Barnett & Land, 2007;

Silk, 1998; Massey, 2005) and some tourism literature (Sin, 2010; Crouch, 2000), which extends the scope responsibility to those outside of one's immediate proximity (Silk, 2004). For example, specifically for the host participants who picked up hitchhikers, what mattered the most was that they were offering somebody a ride who needed it, and it was not at all about whether it was another local or a tourist.

Lastly, evidence uncovered in this study adds another stance from which to view responsibility in regard to tourism. Responsibility is often a central tenet in tourism discourse when discussing volunteer tourists, being that volunteers take on responsibilities to ignite change and have positive impacts on the host communities they visit (Wearing, 2001; Wearing, 2003; Palacios, 2010). Conversely, literature critiquing volunteer tourism focuses on the notion that responsibility in the case of volunteer tourism is "often shaped and constructed around the view that the privileged 'developed world' should be responsible to the less-privileged 'developing world'" (Sin, 2010, p. 984). Within this viewpoint, Sin (2010, 2014), and other scholars such as Raymond and Hall (2008), and Sin and Minca (2014) have questioned the mostly one-sided roles involved when discussing responsibility in the context of volunteer tourism and geographies of responsibility, and as Sin (2010) states:

"The paradox one can here observe then, is that the call for responsibilities based on universal justice, or "sameness" between people despite the distance, is itself continuously placing the "same people" into distinct categories of the "rich" and therefore ones who need to assume responsibilities; and the "poor" and therefore ones who will always remain on the receiving ends of responsible actions" (p. 984).

While kindness in the context of this study is distinct from the responsibility involved within volunteer tourism, notions brought forward in terms of the Icelandic hosts assuming responsibility for the incoming tourists, adds another perspective from which to view

responsibility, as in this context, “different people” are assuming responsibilities, and notions of “rich” and “poor” are not a key factor in this specific context.

Overall, it is clear from the outcomes of this study with specific mention to responsibility, that the way that people engage in kindness can also be historically and contextually contingent. This study indicates that in Iceland, there are certainly historical and contextual motivations behind kindness encounters from the host perspectives, and it is clear that many of the host participants interviewed in this study felt comfortable extending the scope of responsibility to those outside of their immediate proximity. While this seems to be a theme among Icelandic hosts, the outcomes may have been different if this study was done in another destination with its own distinct history and varying environmental, social, or cultural contexts.

5.2 Research Question #2

What circumstances enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships?

As previously discussed within the review of literature, *third space* represents a space of engagement between the culturally different that disregards previous hegemonic, historical, or superiority notions, to create a space of understanding and cohesion (Bhabha, 1994; Hunter, 2001; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004). Based on participant responses and supporting literature, this section will discuss how acts of kindness explored in this study represent a *third space* between culturally different backpackers and Icelandic hosts. Drawing upon supporting literature, the following sections will discuss social/cultural, spatial/environmental and temporal contexts, as well as trust, as specific circumstances enabling kindness to function as a *third space* of cultural hybridity.

5.2.1 Social and Cultural Circumstances

In situating the *third space* in the context of tourism spaces, this construct is viewed as the context of shared space between cultures that might otherwise be disconnected (Hunter, 2001; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004). In this sense, whatever circumstances that bring people together to form this shared space, have a significant impact on the overall formation of cultural hybridity and mutual learning (Wearing et al., 2006; Hollinshead, 2004). As Wearing and Wearing (2006) illustrate, the *third space* is formed through “spaces imbued with traditional social value, but open to dynamic interaction,” and through these contexts, it becomes “a space to learn and interact” (p. 160). Relatedly, Wearing, Stevenson and Young (2004) state,

“it is the third space that makes hybridity possible. Imagining tourism and the travel experience through the lens of a third space opens up the possibility of renegotiating and repositioning the identities of the traveler self” (p. 123).

The way that participants in this study discussed the outcomes of their encounters were consistent with how previous research defines and illustrates hybridity in a tourism context. In many of the participant stories, social exchange was both a motivation and a context for encounters of kindness, and specific social situations such as hitchhiking and Couchsurfing created a context from which both groups could begin to shed preconceptions of the *other*, and start to share, understand, and develop new insights. This both aligns with, and contributes to literature examining the relational potential within the “sharing economy” (see Schor, 2014; Molz, 2013; Wu et al., 2016), as both backpacker and host participants expressed that encounters of kindness that occurred out of social exchange (hitchhiking, Couchsurfing, Meeting at a bar, etc.), ultimately resulted in reciprocal sharing of stories about individual culture and history. This is consistent to ideas put forward by Hollinshead (2004), who stated that the *third space* is meant to represent “that liminal space or interstitial passage between fixed identifications which

entertains ‘difference’ without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p.35). Thus, participants were able to learn and better understand through their encounters of kindness without having to grapple with certain roles or potential dichotomies.

Participants in this study also expressed that situations where their storytelling and engagement with the host or backpacker enabled them to discover similarities between each other (similar travel patterns, previous experiences hitchhiking, similar goals, aspirations, etc.,). In these social situations based around kindness, participants reported that whatever it was that made them different – whether it was culture, language, or their distinct host/tourist roles – did not matter. As one host participant stated, “*it’s different and it’s not different. Like the human part is the same...Sitting on a couch listening to music – it doesn’t matter if you’re from India or Canada. It doesn’t matter*”. This is consistent with how previous research illustrates the cohesion and balance encapsulated within the notion of *third space* in the context of tourism and the host-tourist relationship, as the focus is placed on the shared encounter and resulting learning and engagement (Hollinshead, 2004; Wearing & Wearing, 2006).

While previous studies have aptly defined and described the meaning of *third space* in the context of tourism (Hunter, 2001; Hollinshead, 1998, 2004; Amoamo, 2011), this study lends evidence of specific social circumstances allowing for kindness to exist and function as a *third space*. Other studies have expressed more metaphorically how a *third space* can exist and why it should be a focus in tourism situations, but this research lends credence to what it can actually look like and how it evolves in the context of kindness. For example, one participant Joshua shared an encounter he had with a local woman who picked him up hitchhiking. The initial act of kindness was this woman offering someone a ride who needed it, and her initial motivation might have been that she preferred to have company on her way to work. However, out of this

initial act of kindness, the car then became a social context for *third space* to function. More specifically, while they both might have had different (or even negative) perceptions of each other or each other's' cultures before the encounter began, being in the car together, engaging, and asking questions allowed for a space of mutual learning, ultimately enabling the cultural hybridity inherent in *third space*.

5.2.2 Spatial, Environmental and Temporal Circumstances

While the evidence above denotes that social circumstances clearly enabled *third space* in host and backpacker encounters of kindness, this study revealed that spatial, environmental and temporal circumstances also enabled kindness to act as a space wherein hosts and tourists could connect, relate, and share. For participants that expressed spatial and environmental circumstances as the context for their stories of kindness, it was ultimately the shared physical space or environment that acted as a bridge between cultural differences. For example, some encounters of kindness occurred as a result of harsh weather or a specific emergency. In those moments, notions of superiority, inferiority, or difference that might be inherent in host-tourist interaction (see Hunter, 2001; Hollinshead 1998; Wearing et al., 2006) simply did not exist, and the focus was on sharing the situation and working together to come to a solution. In one specific story, backpackers Sarah and David emphasized how their situation of being stranded in rough weather brought together a group of backpackers and a group of locals. They noted that although there were apparent cultural and language differences, it ended up being a space of balance through just being in the same place and same situation together, working towards a common goal. Other participants noted that in situations like this, kindness and compassion are human reactions, and who we are exhibiting kindness to (whether it is another local, or a tourist) is far from the point. This finding relates to how Wearing, Stevenson, and Young (2009) illustrate

third space in tourism, wherein it “implies a plurality of exchanges and interactions between the tourist and the host, which in turn reconstitutes the terms of the values and constructions that are attached to a specific and unique cultural (tourist) space” (p. 129). In Sarah and David’s situation, not only did they come to a space of balance with the group of Icelanders, but came away from the situation with changed perceptions of Iceland’s culture and nature.

Relatedly, for some participants, temporal contexts are what ultimately led to the encounter of kindness. Many participants shared multiple stories of kindness that were characterized by very brief moments in time, and it was the temporality of the situation that enabled the encounter of kindness to take place. For some the moment of kindness was a brief exchange while providing or receiving directions, or it occurred because someone was headed in the same direction (such as those who picked up hitchhikers). Alternatively, some temporal circumstances enabling kindness only occurred over time. For example, some hosts had decided to travel with backpackers they had met, but only after getting to know them or spending a few days with them. Though the duration of time leading to encounters of kindness varied, these findings are consistent with previous research looking at *how a third space* is formed in that it still allows for construction and reconstruction of identity and perceptions established through encounters with otherness (Law, 1997; Wearing et al., 2009). More specifically, regardless of the duration of the encounter, all participants viewed these encounters in a positive light, wherein they were sharing the same moment with the other person.

5.2.3 Trust

Similar to what Hunter (2001) recognizes as the key to the functioning of a *third space* within tourism, many of the participants in this study noted trust as an imperative motivation or circumstance leading to their encounters of kindness. As Hunter (2001) notes “trust is reliance,

and relying on people to act in certain ways”, and is a prominent issue when it comes to relationships affected by power, dominance, and perceived superiority in tourism. Hunter (2001), as well as Hollinshead (1998, 2004), indicate that mutual trust is also key to the functioning of a *third space* between cultures in tourism. Aligning with the seminal research viewing *third space* in tourism, the findings in this study acknowledge that the aspect of trust is a key factor in what enabled most, if not all of the stories of kindness discussed by participants. All of the participants in this study were asked what role trust had played in their stories of kindness, and many elaborated on the importance and need for trust, specifically in tourism situations where you may be involved in different cultures or interacting with people outside of your immediate culture or language. Looking at the perceptions of trust from both participant group perspectives indicated that trust is not only necessary for the initiator of kindness, but the backpacker participants also noted that they needed to have a certain amount of trust as the receivers of kindness. This finding relates to Hunter’s argument that “trust should be a reflexive event between expectation and outcome (2001, p. 60), and that trust ultimately exists through engagement. Because the notion of trust was so inherent in participants’ stories of kindness, this warrants further exploration of kindness as a specific context for engagement, and a specific context for the creation of a *third space* in tourism relationships.

5.3 Research Question #3

How do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of social or cultural vulnerability?

It became clear through the process of this study that cultural vulnerability due to the presence of tourism is present in Iceland. Due to the country’s small population and previous isolation, many host participants noted feelings of invasion due to tourist presence, and also discussed the shifting values among the population as tourism continues to develop and change.

These findings were unsurprising due to the annual tourist arrivals exceeding one million during the course of this fieldwork, combined with Iceland's worldwide media coverage over the past few years. While determining the origins and scope of vulnerability was not a main focus of this specific study, feelings regarding vulnerability emerged organically through host participant stories and subsequent discussions, and were consistent with previous studies examining vulnerability and social impacts of tourism in Arctic regions (Kajan, 2014; Saarinen, 2014; Lemelin et al., 2010). What was surprising however, was that notions of vulnerability also emerged from the backpacker perspective. Many of the backpacker participants expressed feelings of vulnerability regarding cultural difference and their role and impact as a visitor to Iceland. This outcome led to an interesting insight regarding the potential for vulnerability to be almost cyclical between hosts and tourists (or in this case backpackers), as backpackers perceived that they were unwanted by locals because of their perceptions of tourism's impacts on the host community, ultimately accentuating difference and broadening the gap between the two groups.

While it is important to acknowledge the aspects of vulnerability that emerged through conversations with participants outside of the stories of kindness, this section will discuss how the acts of kindness explored in this study ultimately provided a space to alleviate feelings of vulnerability expressed by host and backpacker perspectives based on their stories and the subsequent outcomes. Drawing on relevant literature, the following sections will discuss changing perceptions of the *other*, and increased community resilience as two ways that encounters of kindness began to alleviate feelings of vulnerability, as expressed by participants.

5.3.1 *Changing Perceptions of the Other*

In previous studies examining the host-tourist relationship and subsequent issues, tourism scholars note that it is the short-term and consumptive nature of tourism that ultimately fosters often-hostile ethnic, racial or cultural difference, which can in turn increase social and cultural vulnerability (Hunter, 2001; Wearing et al., 2001; Sin, 2010; van der Duim, Peters & Wearing, 2005). Difference in tourism encounters can be also accentuated by potential false expectations tourists may have about the destination's culture, as well as the ways in which the host culture reacts to the tourist's culture. The *othering* and *gazing* (Urry, 1998; Maoz, 2006) of cultures occurs when this difference is perceived, which can further the disconnect between the host community and incoming visitors (Adams, 2010; Cinner et al., 2009). The outcomes of this study however, challenged some of these common perceptions in tourism literature regarding the host-tourist relationship, *othering*, host and tourist gazes, and cultural vulnerability. The encounters of kindness explored in this study ultimately created a space wherein the tourism roles were unimportant, as the focus was on the shared situation of kindness, or simply on the "human connection", and the resulting positive outcomes of the encounter.

Where there might have been previous perceived difference enabling *othering* for some of the host participants, a main theme coming out of this study was that participant encounters of kindness really allowed them to change or alter their perceptions of tourists through positive experiences. Some host participants noted that while some of their encounters were very brief while providing directions or answering questions, even those brief positive moments enabled a slight shift in perspective, solely because of the positive engagement. Similar to how *othering* or the host/tourist *gaze* begins with negative experiences and perceiving the other culture as different (see Hunter, 2001; Urry, 1991; Maoz, 2006), these brief moments of positive

engagement with different cultures have the potential to change perceptions over time if they are expected based off of previous positive experiences. While some studies looking at cultural vulnerability note that community cohesion and connectedness are linked to the alleviation of vulnerability (see Cinner et al., 2009; Adams, 2010; Grete et al., 2012), this study's outcomes suggest that situations where hosts can positively engage with tourists can ultimately have the same effect, aligning with previous studies examining host-tourist engagement and trust between cultures (Hunter, 2001; Griffiths & Sharpley, 2012; Zhang et al., 2006). Continuous positive engagement with tourists through situations of kindness can ultimately aid in some of the feelings of invasion host participants may experience due to the presence of tourists.

Alternatively, many of the host participants noted that their initial encounters of kindness served to break the ice, or allow them to feel comfortable engaging with tourists in other contexts or capacities. This shows that in order to challenge notions of vulnerability caused by cultural difference and *othering*, there needs to be a way to bridge the initial gap to be able to really get to know the other person (Hunter, 2011; Hollinshead, 1998). For some, these encounters became a learning experience, allowing them to open their mind and experience different people and cultures. One host participant Henry, described a situation where he first met a Muslim man through providing directions and advice, but ended up sitting down with him at a bar to talk and hang out. This allowed for a space of engagement and learning between them, allowing Henry to learn more and broaden his perspective, and vice-versa. This aligns with previous studies examining the alleviation of cultural vulnerability, noting the need for communities to have some sort of capacity for learning and flexibility as tourists become enmeshed into their culture (Adams, 2010; Fay & Karlsdottir, 2011; Cinner et al., 2009). As Adams (2010) states, host vulnerability can be reduced in situations where they have a greater capacity for learning and

adaptation. Overall, this study suggests that encounters of kindness can ultimately provide a space for learning and adaptation to take place to begin to alleviate notions of vulnerability.

On the other hand, backpacker participants also discussed that their encounters of kindness created a space wherein they were able to learn about the Icelandic culture, and further understand the country they were visiting. Some backpackers noted that situations like hitchhiking or interacting with locals at a bar automatically created a balance or safe space where they could ask questions and further develop their understanding, and vice versa. This allowed backpackers to see the local as a person, and not just as a host, challenging the traditional roles and perceptions that ultimately lead to *othering* (Hunter, 2001; Wearing et al., 2001; Sin, 2010; van der Duim, Peters & Wearing, 2005). Similar to how the host participants experienced their encounters of kindness, backpackers were also able to reflect on their experience and begin to alter their perceptions as well. Some participants specifically noted that through their encounters of kindness, they became more comfortable engaging with locals and bridging the gaps between cultures through learning and sharing. Overall, if both groups are having these positive experiences through encounters of kindness, there is the potential for host and backpacker vulnerability to decrease over time, as learning increases and perceptions change (Hunter, 2001; Cinner et al., 2009).

5.3.1.2 Increased Resilience

As noted in the review of literature, in Arctic tourism destinations, host communities are often susceptible to social and cultural vulnerability due to the introduction of tourism and large influxes of tourists that are inherent to cruise destinations and destinations prone to tourism seasonality (Kajan, 2013; Lemelin et al., 2010; Saarinen, 2014). Stewart, Draper, and Dawson (2011) note that Arctic communities are unique systems, and are deemed vulnerable when

“forced out of equilibrium” due to changes attributed to tourism development and the integration of tourists (p. 35) What some Arctic tourism scholars have noted however, is that social and cultural vulnerability is reduced in communities with greater resilience to impacts resulting from tourists. What this study has demonstrated, aligning with previous research on resilience (see Stewart et al, 2011; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Kajan, 2014; Hovelsrud & Smit, 2010), is that the level of resilience related to social and cultural impacts of tourism is related to the overall attitudes of the host community. The host participants had generally positive attitudes regarding tourists and tourism as a result of their encounters of kindness, and most of them attributed their attitudes to the positive exposure with tourists in their stories of kindness.

What also became clear in relation to this notion of increased resilience is that through interaction with tourists through their encounters of kindness, many of the host participants have come to accept that the tourists will be visiting no matter what, so they need to make the most of it. In this sense, consistent with Hovelsrud and Smit’s (2010) research on resilience and adaptation, encounters of kindness gave host participants a chance to learn about why tourists come to Iceland and what they get out of it. Instead of simply feeling like tourists are invading their space, a lot of host participants noted that in situations like Couchsurfing and hitchhiking, they were able to question and learn why the tourists are around. Some host participants also noted that encounters where they provided travel advice, or talked to tourists about what they had seen in Iceland, had enabled them to further appreciate their own country and culture. This speaks to social and cultural resilience in that these situations provided a space for the locals to teach tourists about their culture, and even experience it with them in some cases, ultimately increasing cultural resilience while simultaneously alleviating notions of cultural vulnerability due to tourist presence and changing cultural values. These lessons regarding learning and

appreciation could ultimately be applied to broader tourism practices in Iceland, working towards a tourism environment where tourists and hosts are encouraged or educated on the importance of such engagement and learning.

5.4 Research Question #4

How might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships?

Connecting to relevant academic literature, the following sections explore the ways in which participants reflected the development and mobilization of relationships out of their initial encounters of kindness. Responding to the initial research question regarding durability of such relationships, this study suggests that encounters of kindness can act as a starting point for the development of relationships and the fostering of social capital. This study also found that for some participants, it was the brief and fleeting moments of kindness that they valued, and these moments sometimes were placed of higher importance than working to develop and maintain such relationships. Additionally, social media was expressed as as a way in which participants intended to mobilize and sustain some of their relationships developed through encounters of kindness.

5.4.1 Kindness as a Starting Point

Contributing to the base of literature regarding the potential for tourism relationships to exist beyond the initial encounter (see Glover & Filep, 2015; Heimtun, 2007), this study found that the encounters of kindness experienced by some participants ultimately acted as a starting point for the development of more durable relationships. This outcome challenges criticisms by Bauman (2001) regarding the brief informal nature of tourism and its ability to only foster transient or superficial bonds or relationships. The stories of kindness and their subsequent

outcomes that emerged from this study ultimately contribute to the discussion of social capital and temporary social capital within tourism contexts, acknowledging kindness as a context for social connection, the development of trust, and goodwill – which are inherent tenets within these concepts (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Glover & Filep, 2015; Portes, 1998). In the context of this study, some backpacker and host participants had the opportunity and time to really connect and engage during their encounters of kindness, enabling them to develop immediate connections that, for some, led to exchanging contact information with intentions to keep in touch. This was apparent in situations such as hitchhiking and couchsurfing, or similar environments that fostered conversation and social connection, allowing people to develop the beginnings of a relationship straight away. These outcomes add to the base of literature viewing social capital in a tourism context, but where previous studies acknowledge the potential for development of social capital between tourists (see Heimtun, 2007 Larsen et al., 2010; Mura & Tavakoli, 2014), this study provides evidence for social capital development, bridging, and relationship durability between tourists and hosts specifically.

Where some encounters were longer in duration therefore making it easier for people to connect and bond, kindness also acted as a starting point for developing relationships for those who had experienced more brief encounters. In specific instances such as short rides while hitchhiking and offering/receiving directions, while the brief encounter may not have fostered the development of a relationship, many participants exchanged information with the intentions to meet again. Some backpackers noted that as a repayment of kindness or an expression of gratitude, they met up with the local again to take them for dinner or coffee, which then acted as another means for further connection and development beyond that initial encounter.

While kindness did act as a starting point for relationships for many of the participants, there was a distinct difference between the types of relationships emerging from the encounters of kindness. Many local participants discussed instances where the connections emerging from their experiences of kindness developed into a relationship that was centered around the tourist or backpacker being in Iceland. In other words, these relationships were brief and local, and consisted of meeting up again and staying connected, but only while both parties were in the country. This aligns with how tourism researchers have defined and illustrated temporary social capital (see Schuller, 2007; Glover & Filep, 2015), as it represents the development of social capital formed around potentially challenging situations in tourism, where the ties formed might be short lived (Bauman, 2001). This study's outcomes however add another perspective to this, in that the relationships sustained from encounters of kindness did last beyond the initial encounter and did enable bonds to be formed, yet only while the traveler remained in the country.

Alternatively, other host participants noted that some of their relationships developed with backpackers and tourists out of encounters of kindness became more durable and lasting, even once they had left Iceland. This provides evidence for the potential for the development of social capital within tourism, responding to gaps in the literature noted by Glover and Filep (2015). More than half of the host participants expressed instances where they had met up with people again – either those people had returned to Iceland to visit, or they had arranged to meet up abroad. This does suggest that kindness can act as a starting point, and through continued communication, the brief and local relationships experienced by some, can evolve into the more lasting relationships experienced by others in the context of this study.

5.4.2 Precious Fleeting Moments

It is important to acknowledge that while this study did provide evidence that encounters of kindness could mobilize into more durable relationships, it also recognized the importance of the brief or fleeting moments of kindness experienced by some of the participants. When asked about staying in touch with certain people they encountered, many of the participants expressed the sentiment that it was not so much about what followed the encounter, but what made the brief moments so precious was the focus on the act of kindness and just being in the moment. One participant expressed that in her situation, it was okay to just “*have it, live it, and leave it*” because even though she may not ever be in contact again with the man in her story, she was eternally grateful for his help in that moment, and that will live on in her memory. Similarly, another participant noted how during his conversation over drinks with an Icelander, he was concerned about being as invested as he could in the conversation and in the moment; with the potential that he might never see her again, he wanted to be fully engaged in the experience.

These precious and fleeting moments ultimately challenge some of the traditional norms that we are taught to expect and experience in terms of the ways in which we interact with other people. This relates to research by Fennell and Butler (2003), who examine human relationships in tourism from a human-ecological perspective. They state that we as humans are biologically programmed to “value and use resources differently and, in doing so, place varying levels of pressure on each other” (p. 197). This could translate into the varying ways people are expected and disciplined (or not) to express gratitude, pay people back, and keep in touch. This illustrates that maybe the concern here should be less about the development and durability of relationships in tourism, and more so on being kind to those we come across, which is inherently precious and human.

5.4.3 Social Media and the Development of International Communities

One specific method used to mobilize encounters of kindness into more durable and lasting relationships discovered in this study is the use of social media. Aligning with studies that credit social media to the development of social capital, (see Ellison et al., 2007; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Chang & Chuang, 2011), it was found that it was the preferred method used by participants to maintain relationships developed through encounters of kindness. All twenty participants included in this study noted using Facebook and email as a way to keep in contact with the people they met through their encounters of kindness, as it allowed them to keep in touch with people regardless of distance. One participant specifically referred to this as the development of international communities. Both host and backpacker participants discussed having contacts worldwide, expressing how they are able to maintain those relationships through the use of social media. This relates to findings by Munar and Jacobsen (2014), who noted that sites like Facebook “increasingly contribute to establishing and maintaining social capital in the form of relationships among users” (p. 52). While some participants expressed that distance still makes relationships developed in tourism difficult to maintain, it was expressed that through wishing someone happy birthday, or liking a photo posted on social media, ultimately helps to keep that person in memory; similar to the social exchange and information exchange inherent in the development of social capital (Putnam, 1995; Glover et al., 2007; Warde et al., 2005). Some host participants discussed that even years after the initial encounter in Iceland, sites like Facebook have enabled them to easily reach out to people they had met, allowing them to coordinate meeting up again, either in Iceland or abroad. While this study suggests that encounters of kindness can be mobilized into more durable relationships, this specific finding

ultimately warrants more research looking at how social media fosters social capital and relationship building in the context of tourism.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

To conclude, the following quote published in a recent Icelandic newspaper article titled *Iceland for Everyone* (also referenced in the introduction of this thesis) aptly illustrates the current situation in Iceland regarding tourism, tourist presence, and the subsequent impacts:

“Mass tourism throws up walls, physical walls of huge hotels between us and the view, and walls between people...Creeping commercialism threatens our propensity to care, share, serve, preserve, and act together without the coordinating vector of profit motive. If luck continues to favor Iceland, and visitors arrive in ever greater numbers, it may be harder still for Icelanders to retain the solidarity and civility of hosts and stewards of a beautiful and dangerous land, in a word of blurring differences.” (Turner, 2016).

It is evident from this somewhat comedic portrayal in the media that the impacts of tourism on Iceland’s culture and environment are very real. While tourism in Iceland is still relatively new, cultural vulnerability due to the presence of tourists is already apparent, and as the industry continues to develop, there needs to be a way to bridge the existing gap between hosts and tourists. Relating to the notions expressed in the above quote, Hunter (2001) defines tourism “an arena where cultures overlap” and states that “rather than extending the cultural horizons of people visiting and being visited, hosts and guests both suffer from the act of commoditizing the human experience (p. 54). Essentially, both academic literature and public opinion indicate that there needs to be a way to break down the walls built up by tourism, and to gain a deeper understanding of how to extend the cultural horizons of hosts and tourists as tourism continues to grow and develop.

Essentially, this thesis has done just that: offered a deeper understanding of how to broaden the cultural horizons of those involved in tourism – or how to foster a *third space* – between tourists and hosts, through exploring encounters of kindness in Icelandic tourism contexts. This thesis has provided a number of discussions, considerations, and outcomes to

emphasize both the importance of this topic, and the relevancy of this research. Reflecting back, the initial purpose of this study was to explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts, placing emphasis on understanding the extent to which encounters characterized by kindness serve as a symbolic *third space* in host-tourist relationships. The research questions guiding this study focused on understanding the meanings and contexts of kindness, and aimed to understand if and how encounters of kindness can begin to address notions of cultural vulnerability in Arctic tourism. The research questions included: 1) What meanings do hosts and tourists in Iceland ascribe to their intercultural encounters characterized by kindness? 2) What circumstances (spatial/temporal or social/environmental/cultural) enable kindness to function as a *third space* in host-tourist relationships? 3) How do acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Iceland intensify or alleviate feelings of cultural vulnerability? And lastly, 4) How might relationships developed through short-term tourism encounters be mobilized into more sustained and durable relationships? Through an ethnographic approach guided by interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, the stories of kindness of eleven international backpackers, and nine Icelandic hosts were collected and synthesized using analysis of narrative. Remaining consistent with the reflexivity of this study, I also recorded instances of my own encounters of kindness throughout my own experiences backpacking in Iceland, and these too were included as data and presented in the research outcomes.

As presented in the discussion chapter, kindness and what it means to individuals is diverse; and through the perspectives of the participants in this study, encounters of kindness varied based on their duration, their perceived impacts, and the degree of planning involved leading up to the encounter. It is also important to note that in all of the participant narratives, the

acts of kindness described went beyond the definition of hospitality in tourism – all of the encounters occurring outside of tourism business, with altruism as a common motivation.

This study focused on the host-tourist relationship and notions of cultural vulnerability inherent to Arctic tourism – two areas within tourism research that are traditionally looked at from a more negative perspective. Broadly speaking, previous studies have mainly focused on why the host-tourist relationship is the way it is, and what impacts cause cultural vulnerability in Arctic situations. What this research did specifically however is illuminate these two issues in a more positive light. This contributes to the trend in tourism academia regarding the use of positive psychology (Filep, 2009; Pearce, 2009; Filep, 2012; Glover & Filep, 2015), as concepts inherent to positive psychology such as happiness, subjective well-being, optimism, are relative to the overall experience of tourism (Filep, 2012). Under the umbrella of positive psychology, this research specifically contributes to questions posed by Glover and Filep (2015), providing evidence that kindness can bridge cultural differences between visiting tourists and host communities. This research also suggests that the concept of *third space* has direct implications for the host-tourist relationship, and using kindness to exemplify *third space* in tourism relationships adds to the increasing base of literature looking at the more positive side of tourism (Mostafanezhad & Hannam, 2014; Caton, 2014; Tucker, 2014; Fennell, 2006; Pearce, 2009; Glover & Filep, 2015).

In a practical context, this research has direct implications for the functioning of tourism in Iceland. Iceland is a destination undergoing many changes due to the introduction of tourism, and while the industry is still in its infancy, it has become one of the top tourism destinations worldwide. Outcomes of this study can have implications for Icelandic tourism stakeholders in understanding how locals perceive these changes and how they grapple with notions of

vulnerability due to tourist presence. Also, this research provides evidence for what specifically creates a functioning relationship or *third space* between Icelandic locals and incoming visitors. Encounters of kindness are just one way that balance and trust can exist between different cultures in tourism contexts, but these examples provide support for the need to truly foster communication and understanding between hosts and tourists.

As Arctic travel becomes increasingly popular, any research that explores tourism activity in destinations such as Iceland, can have implications for other Arctic regions that are beginning to market themselves as tourist destinations. Areas such as Greenland, or communities in the Canadian North that are in the beginning stages of tourism can benefit from understanding, 1) how notions of vulnerability due to tourism activity are experienced by both hosts and tourists, and 2) what situations can foster balance and trust between the two groups. This could be particularly useful for Arctic regions with Indigenous communities, recognizing the need for circumstances that foster *third space* in destinations where there is even more distinct difference between the host culture and visitors.

6.2 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

After undertaking this research process, one limitation of this study that is important to note was the amount of time spent in the field. Longer time spent allows for ethnographic research to be more in-depth. While I was able to interview twenty participants, it would have been beneficial to interview more host participants, as those interviews tended to be shorter and less-detailed. Interviewing more hosts from a range of communities would have also been beneficial in ensuring that the country was adequately represented. Another limitation to address is that the act of providing kindness is only looked at from one perspective – that of the host being kind to the visitor. While it was the intention to ask backpackers to tell stories about times

they had acted kind towards locals, many participants simply had not been in the country long enough to have had those experiences.

One particular finding arising out of this research that my research questions did not touch on, was the conflicting representation of identity of the backpacker. It came to light in the *uncovering vulnerability* section that backpackers interviewed in this study were grappling with the feeling of being conflicted as a tourist, by identifying more with locals than with other forms of tourism. This concern also came to light in some of my own reflexive journaling and photography. With more time, this study could have examined and discussed this further, exploring the backpacker identity, how they see themselves in relation to other tourists, and how that ultimately reflects their relationships with the host population. This is especially important to note because of the fact that backpacking as a form of alternative travel has been accused of opening up tourism into new areas, which then creates a cycle eventually leading to mass tourism. Some of the reflections of backpackers in this study reveal that they are internally trying to distance themselves and shed responsibility for their involvement in mass tourism and the vulnerabilities they observe and possibly contribute to. While the initial goal of this study was to focus more on the relationship between hosts and backpackers and the shared space between, future research could begin to address some of the conflicting notions of identity emerging from this research.

Additionally, while it was not a main purpose when developing the objectives for this study, it is important to acknowledge and perhaps further explore the notion of gender and its role in this specific study. Due to time constraints and sampling procedures, I was only able to recruit five female participants for this study (two hosts, and three backpackers). If more women had been included in this study, it would have been interesting to compare and contrast their

stories of kindness with those of the male participants. It would be significant to examine female participant stories with respect to their willingness to participate in hitchhiking, couchsurfing or related activities, and see how this compares with male participant experiences. One particularly surprising outcome that may warrant this future exploration, is that the stories of all five female participants in this study were based around activities such as couchsurfing, ride-sharing, and hitchhiking – all of these experiences involving interaction with the opposite sex. Future research in this area could address factors and motivations enabling these specific encounters to take place.

Upon undertaking this research project, other issues became apparent that might warrant future research. One area of concern in particular was in regard to notions of vulnerability expressed by host participants. While tourist presence was an obvious and expected cause of cultural vulnerability, many host participants alluded to the fact that the changing and/or clashing values of various tourism stakeholders in Iceland was also causing forms of tension and vulnerability. As Iceland continues to evolve as a tourism destination, evaluating local perceptions regarding tourism would help maintain community cohesion and increase the country's resilience allowing for alleviation of social and/or cultural vulnerability that seems to be currently present.

Another key element in this study that warrants future research was the notion of responsibility. As previously discussed, the outcomes of this study suggested that the ways in which people engaged in kindness in Iceland were historically contingent and contextually situated. This suggests that outcomes regarding the meanings, motivations, and impacts of encounters of kindness could vary in other locations. Future research could also look to replicate this study, but explore acts of kindness and the host-tourist relationship in other destinations. It

would be particularly interesting to look at if and/or how encounters of kindness can foster *third space* in other locations where the host culture and/or language and/or historical context differs significantly from that of the incoming tourists.

Lastly, future research surrounding this topic could continue to explore contexts in tourism that enable the functioning of *third space* between hosts and tourists. This study suggests kindness as one context, however, exploring alternative ways that trust and balance can be fostered can be extremely important in bringing a more positive light to research looking at host-tourist relationships and cultural difference.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Julie Leeming, and I am a Tourism Masters student from the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. I am currently studying the encounters between Icelandic hosts and international backpackers, and more specifically, acts of kindness that occur between hosts and tourists in Arctic tourism contexts.

If backpacker: during your time in Iceland have you had any positive encounters with members of the host population? Would you be interested in discussing these experiences with me in an interview format? (Also provide information letter).

If Host: Have you had any positive encounters with international backpackers? Would you be interested in discussing these experiences with me in an interview format? (Also provide information letter).

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

Appendix B – Information Letter

Dear Participant:

My name is Julie Leeming. This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada, under the supervision of Professor Bryan Grimwood. I am interested in exploring the host-tourist relationship within the context of Arctic tourism in Iceland, and would like to hear about your experiences.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate in my research, you will be asked to take part in one interview of approximately 45 minutes in length, to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. After the interview is completed, I can provide you with a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation, and to add or clarify any points if you so wish.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for one and a half years in a secure location. Only the primary researcher will have access to the data. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about your participation, please contact me at (+1) 226-929-5447 or by email at j2leemin@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Bryan Grimwood at (+1) 519-888-4567 ext. 32612 or email bgrimwood@uwaterloo.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Leeming
MA Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
(226) 929-5447, j2leemin@uwaterloo.ca

Appendix C: Informed Consent form

I have read the information presented in the information about the study “Kindness and Responsibility as a Symbolic Third Space in Arctic Tourism Encounters” being conducted by **Julie Leeming** of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising the researchers of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Yes No

Name (please print)

Signature of Participant

Dated

When the study is completed, would you like to receive a copy of the executive summary?

Yes No

Appendix D: Interview Guide 1: Backpacker

Note: *This interview is intended to be conversational in style, and based upon the reflective narratives and perspectives of participants. Participants will ultimately set the pace of this discussion, and myself as the researcher will listen and probe as the stories arise. Prompts will be used to invite the participant to expand on ideas, or to elaborate and provide detail wherever possible and appropriate as it relates to the stories of kindness experienced in Icelandic tourism contexts. The following scripts will act as a guide; however, interviews will ultimately progress based on the flow of discussion.*

Opening Statement: *Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As previously mentioned, I am interested in stories of kindness within the context of tourism, as well as the relationships that emerge and develop between tourists and members of the host community. This interview is meant to be conversational in style. I have some questions I would like to ask, however, I am also interested in exploring new ideas as they arise.*

I would like to remind you that you are not obligated to participate in the study or respond to any questions in the interview you do not wish to. You may choose to end the interview and/or your participation in this study at any time without repercussions. In order to gain a more accurate account of our conversation today, I will be audio recording our interview. Is this okay with you?

Background Questions:

- 1) Can you tell me a little about yourself, where you are from, and what brought you to Iceland?
- 2) How long have you been here?
- 3) Who are you travelling with?

Main Questions and Prompts:

- 1) Can you please tell me a story about a time during your travels in Iceland when a local demonstrated kindness towards you?
 - What do you think motivated them to help you?
 - In what context did this take place?
 - What role, if any, did trust play in this experience? Please explain.
 - How has this influenced your overall travel experience? Please explain.
 - How did your experiences and encounters of kindness you described modify or change the way you interact with other local people during your time in Iceland?
 - How did you thank them?
 - What happened after?

2) Can you tell me a story about a time when you assisted or demonstrated kindness towards an Icelandic local?

- What drove you to help them?
- What role, if any, did trust play in this experience? Please explain.
- How did they show appreciation?
- What happened after?

Debrief: That concludes my questions. Thank you for your participation and telling me your stories about kindness and your interactions with the host community. If you would like, I can return to you your interview transcript when it's ready. This will give you the chance to elaborate on and clarify details from the stories you've contributed. Thank you.

Appendix E: Interview Guide 2: Host Interview

Note: *This interview is intended to be conversational in style, and based upon the reflective narratives and perspectives of participants. Participants will ultimately set the pace of this discussion, and myself as the researcher will listen and probe as the stories arise. Prompts will be used to invite the participant to expand on ideas, or to elaborate and provide detail wherever possible and appropriate as it relates to the stories of Kindness experienced in Icelandic tourism contexts. The following scripts will act as a guide; however, interviews will ultimately progress based on the flow of discussion.*

Opening Statement: *Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As mentioned I am interested in stories of kindness in tourism contexts, and the relationships that emerge and develop between tourists and members of the host community. This interview is meant to be conversational in style. I have some questions I would like to ask, however, I am also interested in exploring new ideas as they arise.*

I would like to remind you that you are not obligated to participate in the study or respond to any questions in the interview you do not wish to. You may choose to end the interview and/or your participation in this study at any time without repercussions. In order to gain a more accurate account of our conversation today, I will be audio recording our interview. Is this okay with you?

Background Questions:

- 1) Can you tell me a little about yourself, and how you are involved in the tourism industry?
- 2) Approximately how long have been involved in tourism?

Main Questions and Prompts:

1) Can you tell me a story about a time when you assisted or demonstrated kindness towards a backpacker/tourist?

- What drove you to help them?
- What role, if any, did trust play in this experience? Please explain.
- How did they show appreciation?
- What happened after?

2) Can you please tell me a story about a time when a backpacker/tourist in Iceland demonstrated kindness towards you?

- What do you think motivated them to help you?
- In what context did this take place?
- What role, if any, did trust play in this experience? Please explain.

- How did this experience modify or change your expectations or perceptions of backpackers?
- What role, if any, did trust play in this experience? Please explain.
- How did you thank them?
- What happened after?

Debrief: That concludes my questions. Thank you for your participation and telling me your stories about kindness and your interactions with the host community. If you would like, I can return to you your interview transcript when it's ready. This will give you the chance to elaborate on and clarify details from the stories you've contributed. Thank you.

Appendix F: Feedback Letter

University of Waterloo

Date _____

Dear *(Insert Name of Participant)*,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study entitled “Kindness and Responsibility as a Symbolic Third Space in Arctic Tourism Encounters” As a reminder, the purpose of this study explore and understand acts of kindness between tourists and hosts in Icelandic tourism contexts.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to a better understanding of host-tourist relationship within Arctic tourism contexts, and aims to provide the academic community with an increased understanding of, as well as further insight into potential cultural vulnerabilities and alleviation strategies related to integration of tourists into Arctic communities

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the outcomes of this study, or would like a summary of the outcomes, please provide your email address, and when the study is completed, anticipated by [insert date], I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone as noted below. As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005.

Julie Leeming

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Appendix G: Ethics Clearance

Title: Kindness and Generosity as a Symbolic 'Third Space' in Arctic Tourism Encounters

ORE #: 20877

Faculty Supervisor: Bryan Grimwood (bgrimwood@uwaterloo.ca)

Student Investigator: Julie Leeming (j2leemin@uwaterloo.ca)

have been reviewed and are considered acceptable. As a result, your application now has received full ethics clearance.

A signed copy of the Notification of Full Ethics Clearance will be sent to the Principal Investigator or Faculty Supervisor in the case of student research.

Note 1: This ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (REC) is valid for one year from the date shown on the certificate and is renewable annually. Renewal is through completion and ethics clearance of the Annual Progress Report for Continuing Research (ORE Form 105).

Note 2: This project must be conducted according to the application description and revised materials for which ethics clearance has been granted. All subsequent modifications to the project also must receive prior ethics clearance (i.e., Request for Ethics Clearance of a Modification, ORE Form 104) through the Office of Research Ethics and must not begin until notification has been received by the investigators.

Note 3: Researchers must submit a Progress Report on Continuing Human Research Projects (ORE Form 105) annually for all ongoing research projects or on the completion of the project. The Office of Research Ethics sends the ORE Form 105 for a project to the Principal Investigator or Faculty Supervisor for completion. If ethics clearance of an ongoing project is not renewed and consequently expires, the Office of Research Ethics may be obliged to notify Research Finance for their action in accordance with university and funding agency regulations.

Note 4: Any unanticipated event involving a participant that adversely affected the participant(s) must be reported immediately (i.e., within 1 business day of becoming aware of the event) to the ORE using ORE Form 106. Any unanticipated or unintentional change which may impact the research protocol, information-consent document or other study materials must be reported to the ORE within 7 days of the deviation using ORE Form 107.

Best wishes for success with this study.

Sent on behalf of Julie Joza, Senior Manager, ORE.