

Expectations and Experiences of Volunteer Tourism:
A Look from Different Perspectives

by
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Author's Declaration

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.

Tara Casier

Abstract

While the study of volunteer tourism has been growing over the past decade, there is limited literature that takes a global approach, whereby one explores the perspective of a number of stakeholder groups in such experiences. The aim of this project was to fill this gap by looking at the volunteer tourism experience from four perspectives, namely the volunteer, the organization, the host family, and the community at large. The focus in this case was on the experiences and expectations of these groups. The research was qualitative; based primarily upon interviews. The research for this project took place in Ghana.

It was found that the three local stakeholders (the organization members, the host family members and people from the broader community) generally viewed the experience similarly. Volunteers often expressed views that set them apart from the other groups. Main themes for the groups generally revolved around cultural differences, communication and progression through stages of the experience. The stages of the experience showed three main stages, those referring to the time before the volunteer, during the volunteer's stay and the time after the volunteer's departure. Cultural differences included discussions of culture shock, stereotypes, and mis-communications in cross-cultural dialogue. Communication was a major issue, and was to be found lacking between all groups. In regards to communication there was also a suggestion for continuing contact and relationships between the locals and volunteers beyond the volunteer's time in the community.

Keywords:

Volunteer tourism, voluntourism, local stakeholders, volunteer organization, host community, host family, volunteer tourists, voluntourists, expectations

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1.0 Introduction

Volunteering is a popular pastime for many in developed regions and has many positive attributes. Volunteering has been studied as a recreational or leisure-related pursuit for decades. It offers a variety of benefits not only for the volunteer, but also the people whom the volunteers are helping. The focus of this study is a combination of volunteer activity and tourism. Tourism is an area of recreational pursuits that has more mixed reviews. Tourism has created both positive and negative effects for people and communities. A combination of these two areas had led to the development of a specific branch of tourism, referred to as volunteer tourism, which has recently been gaining attention.

The relatively recent increase in attention given to volunteer tourism could be due to increases in media exposure, through the engagement in such activities by popular actors, actresses and other influential persons in the public sphere, or simply the result of word-of-mouth promotion as more people participate in such endeavours. Accompanying this boom in participation has been a rapid expansion within the body of academic literature relating to volunteer tourism (also known as “voluntourism”) over the past decade. Despite this expansion, scholarly research has not fully investigated the expectations and/or experiences of multiple stakeholder groups in volunteer tourism activities. Coghlan (2008) states that “To date, most research in this sector has focused on the volunteer tourist’s experience, motivations, needs and the post-tourism experience” (p. 183, citing: Broad, 2003; Brown & Lehto, 2005; Brown & Morrison, 2003; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Ellis, 2003b; Foster-Smith & Evans, 2003; Galley & Clifton, 2004; Halpenny & Caissie, 2003; McGehee, 2002; Miles, Sullivan, & Kuo, 1998; Uriely, Reichel & Ron, 2003; Wearing, 2001; Weiler & Richins, 1995). Such a focus on the volunteers in volunteer tourism research exposes a gap in the literature relating to local stakeholder groups. More recently, Woosnam and Lee (2011) note a similar trend explaining that “the focus of voluntourism research has been on voluntourists themselves and not host residents or the cultural differences and understanding between representatives of each group” (p. 310). This thesis aims to both build on the existing literature and fill gaps relating to local stakeholders in volunteer tourism.

The need for more study in this area is important because these forms of tourism may be more risk-laden for the host community than other types; as the majority of locations catering to volunteer tourists are in vulnerable communities in developing nations. It has been well documented that tourism, in general, can create significant negative impacts upon both natural and built environments as well as having negative social and cultural impacts (Harrison, 2001). These impacts may be magnified for vulnerable communities, including those catering to volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism may also have a greater impact on the local culture because of the degree of contact between the tourist and residents. A relatively common effect of tourism is referred to as “the demonstration effect”, and describes the process by which people in the host community may try to imitate/emulate the tourist. In volunteer tourism, this effect could be multiplied because of higher levels of interaction between the host and guest when compared to other forms of tourism.

Expectations are important in volunteer tourism because of the relation of expectation confirmation to levels of satisfaction. The relationship between expectations, satisfaction and volunteer tourism are discussed at length in the literature review. Shrivastava’s (1983) approach from the information processing perspective suggests that participants in any range of activities will attempt to make sense of that participation. Expectations are considered to be central to that “sense making” process.

These expectations play two important roles (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). The first is that of anticipation. Through anticipation, participants develop a sense of what is going to happen. They expect that certain conditions will be met. The second role is that of a comparator. The results of the participation are actively compared to the individual’s own expectations. As such, expectations provide a baseline against which participants compare actual events and occurrences (Helson, 1964). Further, a range of acceptability develops around that expectation (Petty & Caccioppo, 1981). Actions and events judged to be consistent with positive expectations are categorized within this range and are more likely to be considered acceptable (Oliver, 1997).

Thus, if there are positive expectations of an experience and those expectations are met, satisfaction is more likely to result. As a result, expectations are important to satisfaction levels not only for the volunteers but for all people affected by volunteer tourism activities.

1.1 The Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study was to determine expectations and identify important elements of the volunteer tourism experience from the different perspectives that form the experience. This necessitated developing an understanding of the views of all major stakeholders in the volunteer tourism experience, including the volunteers, the organizers, the host community, and the host families. The goal was to gain insight into the experiences and expectations of the various stakeholder groups around the volunteer tourism experience.

During the research, I sought to understand the expectations the participants brought to the experience and discover concepts important to the participants in the experience itself. I looked at both the nature and the source of those expectations. This relates to the anticipation based role of expectations suggested by Szymanski and Henard (2001) whereby anticipation is built based upon

expectations. Participants were also asked about their current experience and how it compared to their original expectations.

This was a qualitative study and, as such, data were collected in the form of semi-structured interviews and observations. The details of the methods used are provided in Chapter Three. A qualitative approach was considered optimal in this case as it allowed for a great amount of rich information, which is important as there is limited existing research on this topic.

1.2 Objective and Research Questions

As described above, the goal of this research is to determine what expectations of volunteers and volunteer organizations are held by various stakeholders in volunteer tourism ventures and what implications such expectations could have, as well as identify important elements of the experience itself from those differing perspectives.

The main research questions that I will address are:

1. What are the expectations of the volunteer tourism experience, as held by the four different stakeholder groups?
2. How are the expectations and experiences similar or different between the groups?
3. What are the implications of these similarities or differences?
4. What suggestions may be made to mitigate potential negative effects of volunteer tourism?

1.3 Understanding the Perspective of the Researcher

It is important to understand how I am approaching this project. I have been interested in volunteer tourism pursuits for a number of years, mainly from the perspective of the volunteer tourist. As a result of this interest, I had participated in two volunteer tourism experiences prior to this trip. First, I volunteered with a cultural awareness program in Mexico for two weeks in 2005. There, several other volunteers and I assisted in a small village with tasks such as making bricks and picking crops. Second, I volunteered in Ukraine for a span of three months working with people with special needs. This was done through a program at St. Jerome's University. Finally, I engaged in this project for my thesis, not only as a researcher, but also as a volunteer, this time both assisting in an orphanage and teaching in a school.

1.4 Thesis Layout

Chapters Two and Three include the literature review and a discussion of the methods used in the study, respectively. Chapter Four includes information regarding locations in Ghana where I conducted the study, including information on the volunteer tourism organizations, and the study

participants. The results of the data analysis are reported in Chapter Five, while further discussion and connections to the literature and limitations are provided in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven recommendations for future research are identified. Chapter Eight is dedicated to concluding remarks. Finally, references are provided and additional relevant documents, such as the draft questions for the various stakeholder groups and charts depicting characteristics of participants for different stakeholder groups, are included as appendices.

2.0 Literature Review

This review presents a discussion of the key areas in the literature related to volunteer tourism, with an additional focus on tourism in developing nations. In the first section of this literature review, I present a brief overview of the following areas: tourism; alternative tourism, where volunteering falls in the realm of leisure; serious leisure; and how tourism and volunteering work together within the aforementioned groupings. The second section is dedicated to discussing volunteer tourism, its importance and the people who engage in such volunteering pursuits. This includes a description of the phenomenon and the general characteristics of the volunteer tourist, as well as a brief description of literature exploring how volunteer tourists see both their role and themselves as volunteers.

The third section identifies motivations for participating in volunteer tourism experiences. I consider how motivations and expectations can be similar and do generally work in tandem, but also their important differences. The term “expectation” is defined and discussed in terms of expectations held by various parties within tourism, volunteering, and, particularly, volunteer tourism. It should be noted that, in terms of volunteer tourism, the concept “motivation” has been studied in more depth than expectations, and therefore will be discussed in more depth. This provides a benchmark for some of the data found in this study for comparative purposes. The fourth section focuses on the impacts of tourism. I first provide a general review of the literature regarding tourism impacts and then focus on information regarding tourism in developing nations. I then look, in particular, at the effects of volunteer tourism. The final section of the literature review reflects on the future of volunteer tourism as considered by various academics, institutions, and organizations.

2.1 Tourism and Alternative Tourism

Tourism has been defined in a number of ways. For instance, Collins (2008) defines tourism as the “temporary movement of people to destinations outside of the places where they normally live and work, generally for pleasure, although there is a growing sector for business tourism, and their activities during their stay at these destinations” (p. 75). Other definitions involve similar aspects. For the purposes of this study I will be using the definition posed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1994:

...tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes (as cited in Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003, p.7).

To break this down further, staying outside of one’s usual environment means outside of areas of “usual residence, frequent and regular trips between the domicile and the workplace, and

other community trips of a routine character” (Goeldner & Ritchie, p.7). In the case of volunteer tourism, it could be important to include the concept of time, as noted in the above definition, as some people volunteer abroad up to and beyond one year, this cusp being the point at which the person volunteering is no longer considered to be a tourist. Individuals staying beyond one year could have motivations and experiences that are very different from those choosing shorter trips, and so they are not included in this study.

Tourism is dynamic. Traditionally, people have taken part in tourism activities that may be best described as mass tourism activities. These are comprised mainly by mainstream tourism activities, such as beach-style travel. However, one of the most recent and major changes in tourism is a shift in the focus away from traditional mass/conventional tourism (Wearing & Neil, 2009). This shift has resulted in the growth of a relatively new form of tourism most often referred to as alternative tourism.

Alternative tourism was borne out of the move from people selecting traditional mass tourism forms of travel holidays, such as sand, sea and sun vacations, to more individualized and relatively unique experiences (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). There are many different definitions of alternative tourism as it has been “interpreted by various authors in widely differing and sometimes openly contradictory ways” (Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 1). Wearing and Neil go on to explain that “for some it is up-market package tours of rich people to exotic destinations, mostly wilderness areas, young people carrying rucksacks wandering around the globe with limited financial means, or travel that gives emphasis to contact and understanding between locals and tourists, as well as the environment” (p. 1, citing Butler, 1990; Cohen, 1972; Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002; Priporas & Kamenidou, 2003; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Regardless, alternative tourism is commonly seen as one end of a spectrum of tourism activities with the other end comprised of traditional/conventional mass tourism activities (Wearing, 2001). This moniker of alternative tourism is further explained by Lyons and Wearing (2008) describing it as “a form of tourism that rebukes mass tourism and the consumptive mindset that it engenders and instead offers alternative, more discriminating, socially and environmentally sustaining tourist experiences”(p. 3). For the purposes of this study, I will be using the concept by Lyons and Wearing noted above.

There are many niches within alternative tourism, including nature-based tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, and volunteer tourism (McGehee, 2002; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). As volunteer tourism is within the realm of alternative tourism, this area of alternative travel is important to look at when considering volunteer tourism. Specific forms of alternative tourism, such as ecotourism and volunteer tourism, are becoming increasingly significant and, as Wearing argues, are collectively being considered as “a significant area of tourism

experience” (2001, p. 6). Alternative tourism is sometimes described as a form of tourism promoting ‘just travel’, whereby one considers and works to mitigate the exploitation of resources and develop equality through the fair exchange of funds, knowledge and understanding with the host community (Holden, 1984). Alternative tourism, according to Holden, is “a process which promotes a just form of travel between members of different communities [and] seeks to achieve mutual understanding, solidarity and equality amongst participants” (Holden, 1984, p.15). Within alternative tourism there are concepts that have been largely debated since initial development. This is particularly true in ecotourism since its conception, and with growing distrust as it has become more mainstream in recent years this has only increased (Higham, 2007; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001; Wheeler, 1991). This is further discussed below.

Regarding volunteer tourism Wearing (2001) notes that, “the stress here is on the facilitation and improvement of contacts between hosts and guests, especially through the organization of well-prepared special interest tours, rather than on actual development of facilities” (p. 29). There are other types of alternative tourism that do not necessarily conform to this standard, such as dark tourism, but the focus of this study is on just or equitable travel. Volunteer tourism has only recently begun experiencing a more critical examination of such concepts, with most literature to date showing it in a positive light (Sin, 2010).

According to Wearing and Neil (2009) ecotourism can most simply be described as “a low key, minimal impact; interpretative tourism where conservation, understanding, and appreciation of environment and cultures visited are sought” (p. 4). They identify four key components of ecotourism to be: a requirement of movement/travel, generally to a protected or relatively undisturbed natural area; that the activity is nature-based; it is a conservation-led activity; and that it has an educative role. However, Higham notes, “one of the most common criticisms of ecotourism is the sheer breadth of definitions that have been proposed to delineate the phenomenon” (p. 4). This means that while the above description of ecotourism is adequate for this study there are further descriptions that do exist. He further explains the problem that this causes stating that this “is a situation that hinders the effective and sustainable development of ecotourism due to the uncertain policy, planning and development foundations that underpin the sector” (p. 4).

Ecotourism was once portrayed as a prime example of alternative tourism with similar altruistic or just underpinnings, but it has been suggested that this area of tourism is becoming more mainstream and consumptive, thus undermining some of the initial drive for ecotourism development (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). This may also partially relate to the lack a clear, universal definition of ecotourism. It must also be noted that some authors have expressed distrust and/or disbelief since the conception of ecotourism (Higham, 2007). For instance, Wheeler (1991) notably argued that

ecotourism, “[b]y clothing itself in a green mantle, the industry is being provided with a shield with which it can both deflect valid criticism and improve its own image while, in reality, continuing its familiar short term commercial march” (Wheeller, 1991, p. 96; as cited by Higham, 2007).

Potentially due to some of these concerns it now appears that supporters of the alternative tourism movement are moving toward volunteer tourism in lieu of ecotourism. As Lyons and Wearing (2008) explain “Other forms of alternative tourism have also emerged in recent times but it is volunteer tourism that has become the new ‘poster-child’ for alternative tourism in the past few years” (p. 6). It is important to understand how volunteer tourism works and fits, both within the existing community structure and tourism in general, as well as to understand what must be done to avoid compromising the original intent of this niche of tourism (Wearing, 2001). The next section addresses these issues.

2.1.1 Leisure: The Link between Tourism and Volunteering

Before delving deeper into the specific categories of volunteer tourism and volunteering, one must understand the broader context in which these categories exist. Tourism and volunteering both are generally considered to be forms of leisure.

Under the umbrella of leisure there are many groups, and there is much overlap between these different groups. Some of these groups include tourism, purple leisure, serious leisure, sports and outdoor recreation and hobbies. Many of these niches of leisure do have non-leisure-related components. For example, not all tourism is related to leisure; some tourism/travel may be business-related.

It is within these areas of overlap between leisure and tourism that one may place volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism can be considered to be both a form of serious leisure and a form of tourism, and more specifically, and as is introduced above, alternative tourism (Wearing, 2001). Thus volunteer tourism shares some characteristics and/or properties of these two main categories of leisure: serious leisure and tourism.

As a result of such overlaps, there are some concepts that, although developed or introduced in one area of leisure, may apply to others. One example that links to this study is a model by Clawson and Knetch (1966). This model was originally developed to describe travel to parks, but has since been adopted as a model for various leisure pursuits, including tourism. It noted five different stages in the experience of travel to a park. The first stage was one of planning or anticipation, the second was travel to the site, the third was the activity on site, the fourth was travel home, and the final stage related to reminiscing/recounting the events of the experience. One can see how this would relate not only to general leisure but also to tourism. This model adds in a time element to

form a coherent sequence regarding the participant's engagement in the activity. In this study, it could be seen to help organize participant's thoughts regarding the experience, which can later be seen reflected in the results. The next section further elaborates upon the concept of serious leisure and volunteering.

2.1.2 Serious Leisure

Volunteering and those participating as volunteers have often been described as 'volunteer work' and 'volunteer workers' respectively in past research by authors including Stebbins (1996 & 2001), Vaillancourt and Payette (1986) and Wearing (2001). The general use of the word 'work' could be thought to indicate labour, obligation or difficulty considering the use of the term 'work'. However, much of the literature also explores this concept of 'volunteer work' in terms of it as a leisure activity (Holmes & Smith, 2009; Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith & Baum, 2010; Stebbins, 1996; Stebbins 2001). Holmes and Smith even go so far to say that many people consider their volunteering activities to be a form of leisure. Many authors, including Holmes and Smith and Stebbins, consider volunteering activity to fall firmly within the auspices of serious leisure. Serious leisure is a term developed to describe activities in which one participates in work-like leisure pursuits (Arai, 1997; Stebbins, 2001). Stebbins, the most influential thinker in this area, defines serious leisure as:

...the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, and experience (Stebbins, 2001, p. 1).

According to Stebbins (2007), serious leisure consists of three main groups of activity, namely "amateur pursuits, hobbyist activities, and career volunteering" (p.6). Such groupings can be used to illustrate some areas of overlap of tourism and serious leisure, such as amateur sport, which commonly involves a good deal of travel, as well as the obvious overlap of participation in volunteer tourism. This means that participants in various forms of volunteering, such as volunteer tourists and local volunteers, may share similar characteristics, including some motivations and the determination and/or formation of expectations. In his 2001 book, Wearing also notes such concepts when describing the volunteer tourist.

Stebbins (2007) identifies six distinguishing characteristics of serious leisure participants. The first quality is the need to persevere, while the second is developing a "leisure career". The third is a "personal effort using their specially acquired knowledge, training, experience, or skill, and, indeed at times, all four" (p.11). The final three qualities are "durable benefits, [...] a unique ethos, [...] and that] participants identify strongly with their chosen pursuits" (p.11). Additionally, it can be seen that participants in both serious leisure and tourism often expend a great deal of resources into

their endeavours including the investment of time, energy, and assets. The next section further explores the area/action of volunteering/volunteerism.

2.1.3 Volunteerism

Volunteering is considered to be a donation of one's time and/or abilities, typically for the benefit of others in a community (Holmes & Smith, 2009). There are four main elements that are noted in most definitions of volunteering. These elements are: the free choice of the volunteer; little to no remuneration for services rendered; the participants occupy relatively structured positions as volunteers; and, finally, the activities are for the benefit of others (Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth, 1996; Holmes & Smith, 2009; Stebbins, 2007).

Holmes and Smith (2009, p. 11) note six main emerging areas of volunteer activities in recent years. These areas are:

1. International, transnational, or cross-national volunteering
2. Volunteer tourism
3. Episodic volunteering
4. Virtual, online or cyber-volunteering
5. Family and intergenerational volunteering
6. Corporate, workplace, employee or employer-supported volunteering

The authors argue that some of these areas have a long history while others are relatively new, but all areas of volunteering have been increasing in popularity/interest in recent years, both in practice and in study.

Many people devote time and money every year to assisting others through volunteering. Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen and Miene (1998) define volunteerism as a:

...manifestation of human helpfulness [...], whereby people provide, among other services, companionship to the lonely, tutoring to the illiterate, counselling to the troubled, and health care to the sick, and do so on a regular, ongoing, voluntary basis, with their voluntary help often extending over long periods of time. (p. 1516)

Further, volunteering is typically comprised of three activities. First, individuals seek out a place where they can help. Second, they deliberate over their willingness to volunteer and consider the extent to which they can afford to volunteer. Third, there is a sense of commitment to volunteering once it is decided upon (Clary *et al.*, 1998).

As Clary *et al.*, make clear, volunteerism is “planned helpfulness”, and it represents a phenomenon that may be found to be less demanding than paid employment or emergency situations and, instead:

...engages processes that encourage individuals to look inward to their own dispositions, motivations, and other personal attributes for guidance in

deciding whether to get involved in helping, in this election of a helping opportunity, and in the maintenance of helping over an extended course of involvement (Clary et al., 1998, p.1529).

This inward focus is described as a goal of self-development that is also sought by many involved in volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001). In the next section, I explore the phenomenon of volunteer tourism.

2.2 Volunteer Tourism

Volunteering in the context of volunteer tourism can be a great resource not only in terms of physical assistance but also in teaching, skill-building, and, in some cases, contributing financially (Caudron, 1994). Though it can be considered a great resource, it must be managed in order to obtain optimal benefits for all parties involved (Caudron, 1994). As noted by Holmes and Smith (2009), volunteers contribute in a variety of ways within the field of tourism. They argue that such volunteer participation can be found in a number of forms, including volunteering in one's local community during tourism-related events, such as, at a mega-event like the Olympics, or traveling abroad as a volunteer tourist. The authors go so far as to say that, "without volunteers, many tourism organizations, particularly those in the not-for-profit sector, would have to reduce their activities or may even cease to operate" (p. 1).

One must also remember that volunteering can be very dynamic, with ebbs and flows in the number and quality of volunteers available to an organization in any given time period (Mesch, Tschirhart, Perry, & Lee, 1998). In relation to volunteer tourism, this means that the structure of such organizations must be set in such a way that if volunteer levels decrease, the loss to the organization and, more importantly, for the host community will be minimized.

As noted above, volunteer tourism has been categorized by many authors as a form of alternative tourism (Coghlan, 2008; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001). However, it is only recently that volunteer tourism has been set firmly within the realm of alternative tourism. This point was debated, in the past, as researchers noted qualities/characteristics of volunteer tourism that could have placed them in other areas (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001). As a result of such ambiguity, volunteer tourism had fallen under various headings in research, including: alternative tourism; international volunteering; social work; and conservation corps work (Wearing, 2001). In addition to challenges in terminology, volunteer tourism has also been labelled in a number of ways, including voluntourism, volunteer vacations, gap year travel volunteering, and volunteering abroad (Holmes & Smith, 2009).

Nonetheless, although volunteer tourism has been rapidly expanding over the past ten years, it has roots in organizations that appeared more than 70 years ago (Wearing, 2001). This change is

occurring, not necessarily because the tourism industries want such a change but because the ideas and needs of the tourist appear to be changing. As stated by Wearing:

What we are beginning to see is a new form of alternative tourism, that of volunteer tourism, where new business structures, new motivations for travelling, new experiences to be had and indeed a new type of tourist are emerging. There is not only a greater consideration for the contribution the volunteer can make to the community in which they take part, but also a much greater awareness of the impact the experience has on the personal development of the participant. It is through the latter that we will uncover the nature of volunteer tourism. (2001, p. 21)

One of the most influential authors in this area of study is Stephen Wearing. His focus on the topic of volunteer tourism has more of an ecological base than others, with his 2001 work using the terms ecotourism and volunteer tourism almost synonymously. In 2001, Wearing proposed that volunteer tourism is comprised of the following components: ecotourism, volunteerism, and serious leisure. Since that time, Wearing's attention has shifted from ecotourism to volunteer tourism, and he has further differentiated ecotourism from volunteer tourism. In particular, he has noted that volunteer tourism and ecotourism have quite different foci, particularly because of the more recent shift in ecotourism from its original intent towards more profit-driven motives (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

One can see that the topic of volunteer tourism is complex. Volunteerism, serious leisure, sustainable tourism, community development, community involvement and relationships between stakeholders are some of the more important aspects in volunteer tourism, and, as such, they are discussed throughout this study.

Though much research to date in volunteer tourism has been focused on projects that are ecological or environmental in nature, it has also been acknowledged that there are other areas of volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001; Scheyvens, 2002). Some of these other areas include archaeological exploration and social projects, such as habitat for humanity (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

Despite the many aspects of volunteer tourism, it is important to provide a definition. As noted above, volunteer tourism is comprised of two parts, volunteering and travel outside of one's normal environment. There are a variety of definitions, but for the purposes of this study, a definition of volunteer tourists given by Wearing was used as a springboard. According to Wearing, volunteer tourists are:

[t]ourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment. (2001, p. 1)

Now, after having identified some of the elements that comprise and define volunteer tourism, it is important to recognize why these volunteer activities and the study of these experiences are significant. The next section aims to explain the need for such endeavours.

2.2.1 The Importance of Volunteer Tourism and Its Study

Until recently, volunteer tourism was one of the most under-studied areas of alternative tourism (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). This is now changing, but there still are many gaps in the literature. For example, it is important to plan for and recognize changes that occur in a community due to the exposure to volunteer tourism. Yet there are few studies assessing such changes. This type of tourism most commonly occurs in developing/less developed countries. Such communities as these may not be prepared for tourism development or changes posed by organizations involved in the tourism industry (Harrison, 2001). Thus having resources available, such as guides or other materials in order to prepare local people for any effects, may be beneficial. I hope that such resource materials might be developed out of studies such as this.

Understanding how various factors, such as expectations, motivations, attitudes, personalities, and lifestyles, influence tourist choices and behaviours could assist in developing more effective policies and promote more sustainable development of host communities through volunteer tourism (Budeanu, 2007). Similarly, a deeper understanding of the expectations of various groups could be used to increase the satisfaction levels of all parties involved in volunteer tourism ventures and thereby make it more viable for the future (Wearing, 2001).

There is great potential for successful volunteer projects wherein the residents become involved and empowered through teaching and learning with people from other cultures. In particular, when community members are given the opportunity to teach the volunteers about various aspects of their life and culture and people learn how to do things both for the benefit of themselves and others, the flow of knowledge (and power) is not uni-directional (Freire, 2000).

Some studies suggest that participation in volunteer tourism activities may change the participant's behaviour, work, and even their way of thinking and seeing the world (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). This may mean that the outcomes of a positive or a negative experience may have more far-reaching consequences than that of mainstream tourism, though this needs to be better addressed in the literature (McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). Because of the potential for stronger impacts on the community and individuals involved in volunteer tourism, this form of tourism should be considered and planned more carefully, or to a greater extent, than more 'normal' tourism endeavours. As stated by McGehee and Santos (2005):

The very uniqueness of a volunteer tourism experience explains why participation in it can increase network ties and provide consciousness raising opportunities. High levels of interaction with other volunteers, researchers, local officials, and residents facilitate the establishment of an alliance. Though this interaction may not be particularly lengthy, often the intensity makes up for the duration. Volunteers often share meals, sleeping areas, training time, and even travel to and from sites over the course of an excursion. This provides many opportunities to exchange information about networks and to form ties that might have not developed otherwise. (p. 764)

Such ideals of empowerment for members of local communities are one part of the social change movement that is occurring around the world. Elements of this movement include the promotion of equality and offering a 'hand-up' to those who need it (McGehee, 2002). Specifically, a 'social movement' refers to "an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society" (Marshall, 1994, p. 489, as cited in McGehee & Santos, 2005, p. 761). Such proposed changes for the empowerment of others may be what many are striving for as they participate in volunteer tourism. Unfortunately, critics argue, this goal may not be reached as volunteer tourism projects are sometimes merely 'quick fixes' and many projects do not necessarily tie in to the needs of the local community (Guttentag, 2009; Sin 2010).

The existence of such 'quick-fix' solutions in volunteer tourism could be related to the levels of motivation, financial ability, and the time that volunteers have for the projects and are limited to the current knowledge base for use in planning these activities (Coghlan, 2008). In part, these restrictions could stem from the expectations that volunteer tourists may have of the programs and the expectations organizations and others may have of the volunteers. To date there has been little study regarding the expectations of the local stakeholder groups involved in volunteer tourism (Lyons & Wearing, 2009).

Nonetheless, there has been a variety of research on different types of volunteer tourism placements. Scheyvens (2002) suggested two distinct groupings of volunteer tourism endeavours, with one based upon conservation (ecologically focused) work and the other with more development focused volunteer work. To further explain, conservation based volunteer tourism is generally based upon the natural environment. Alternately development based volunteer tourism, in this case, consists a range of activities relating to different subject areas, "from offering medical assistance, involvement in economic and social development or even projects geared towards heritage and cultural restoration (Wearing, 2001)" (as cited by Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004)

To date, there has been a great deal of research on conservation/ecologically-based volunteer tourism (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). This research has covered a range of material from identifying characteristics of volunteer tourists to assessing the impact of such volunteers or determining the

values of volunteers, to name a few. For example, a study by Brightsmith, Stronza, and Holle (2008) considered the costs and benefits to volunteer researchers in a conservation project. Another study by Campbell and Smith (2006) assessed the values of volunteers in a project dedicated to sea turtle conservation.

In terms of the second group posed by Schyvens (2002), regarding volunteer tourists in development, there has been limited research, such as the work of Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) on a Habitat for Humanity project in South Africa. Generally though, such humanitarian-based or socio-culturally oriented projects have not been studied as thoroughly as conservation-based volunteer tourism (Stoddart & Rogerson).

As is the case with any other form of tourism, volunteer tourism is dependent upon individuals wanting to travel. There are differences between people engaging in different types of tourism, but there are also some commonalities. Volunteer tourism is no different. Research assessing the characteristics of volunteer tourists is described in the next section.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Volunteer Tourists

First, within the discussion of the volunteer tourist is the concept of where volunteer tourists fit within the general framework of tourism. In the broader area of tourism, Cohen (1972) proposed that there are four main groups of tourists: 'drifters', 'explorers', 'individual mass tourists', and 'organized mass tourists'. The 'organized mass tourist' and the 'individual mass tourist' comprise the bulk of tourists. These two groups tend to visit a destination once a tourism market has developed and there are more services firmly established in the community that are more familiar to the visitor (Cohen; Bjerneld, Lindmark, McSpadden & Garrett, 2006). Such establishments are thought by the public to offer a greater sense of security through familiarity; and responsibility for planning and experiences may fall upon other people, in some cases with others planning the majority of the experience (rather than the tourist). In the case of the drifter or explorer, the experience is more likely to have them involved in a decision-making role wherein they are expected to be more responsible for their behaviours and the outcomes of their experience (Cohen). Both the activities engaged in and the characteristics of these two groups generally differ by a relatively large margin. Thus, if the majority of volunteer tourists are 'explorer' or 'drifter' types of tourists, as has been proposed by Wearing (2001), but are thought to be 'typical' tourists by the community issues may arise if mass tourist groups begin to descend upon the community. It has also been suggested that there is a continuum of volunteer tourist types, ranging from shallow to deep volunteer tourists, or, alternately from volunteering focused to vacation-oriented visitors (Brown & Lehto, 2005; Coghlan, 2008; Weiler & Richins, 1995).

As noted in the description of volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists participate in volunteer activities/projects in places away from their normal environment to benefit 'the greater good' of society. This is important to keep in mind as it helps us to differentiate volunteer tourists from mass tourists and also may help identify target groups who are more likely to participate in such endeavours. As is discussed later, the motivations of volunteer tourists may differ from those of the traditional tourist as well as from those of the local volunteer, which could be important in planning for the future.

A variety of studies have been conducted on characteristics of volunteer tourists and/or identifying various commonalities between different cohorts (Brightsmith, Stronza, & Holle, 2008; Brown & Morrison, 2003; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; McGehee, 2002; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001). Based on a study by McGehee (2002), the characteristics of the 'typical participant' in the Earthwatch organization tended to be female (70%), the largest group were single (48%), while 31% were married. Additionally, a large portion had some post-secondary education, with the largest educational group, 38%, of participants reporting that they were graduate school alumni, and the vast majority were of European descent (92%). The majority of volunteers could be found in two main cohorts in terms of age: ages 46 and 55 (with 30% of those studied) and 23% being under the age of 20. The mean age reported was 41 while the median age was 46.

Many of the themes noted by McGehee were reinforced in a study by Stoddart and Rogerson (2004). Though most of the characteristics were similar, the authors noted that the most common age group was slightly older. In this study it was found that the largest segment was between the ages of 50 and 55. The second most common age group included individuals in their 20s. Alternatively, Wearing (2001) stated that the majority of volunteer tourists are between 18 and 25 years of age. As one can see from this data there are some differences in terms of common age groups participating in volunteer tourism. However, other characteristics appear to remain steady across most studies, such as participants being of European descent with higher levels of income and education than the average population.

In terms of participation, McGehee (2002) found that the summer months of those living in the northern hemisphere (June and July) were the most popular times for participation in these activities. This is likely related to the timing of school summer breaks for younger cohorts and any group travel involving youth. McGehee also reported that 70% of the people who completed the survey were only on their first such experience. Even so, when combined with the number of trips done by the repeat volunteer tourists, the mean average of volunteer tourism experiences per person was two for that survey, indicating a high number of trips for the repeat volunteer tourists. Also, it has been reported that participants in volunteer tourism generally identify themselves with a religious

group (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Stoddart and Rogerson also noted that the majority of the participants of their study reported being Christian.

Brightsmith, Stronza, and Holle (2008) report that, to date, volunteer tourism has been largely dominated by “Western Europeans, Australians, Poles, Japanese, and North Americans” (p. 2833). This domination of volunteer tourism by western-based travellers is affirmed by a study by Brown and Morrison as the majority of volunteer tourists in their study were also from westernized nations (2003).

Finally, and as an interesting insight into the image volunteer tourists have of themselves, Wearing (2001) argues that volunteer tourists often do not see themselves as tourists. He notes that they more commonly see themselves as travellers, or simply volunteers, preferring not to be lumped with mass tourism and the dangers or negative impacts/issues relating to tourism in general. This could relate to how the participant sees themselves and the motivations and/or expectations that they hold. The next major section moves on to discuss motivations and expectations, both generally and in regards to volunteer tourism specifically.

2.3 Motivations and Expectations

Motivations and expectations are closely linked in decision-making processes though motivation appears more frequently as the focus in tourism research. In some respects these could be seen as two sides of the same coin, as motivations lead one to choose a path of action which is expected to fulfill the needs and/or wants and expectations of that individual. These ideas are further discussed below.

2.3.1 Motivations

Beh and Bruyere (2007) state that, “[h]uman beings engage in behaviours in order to realize certain benefits. Motivations are understood as the underlying forces that arouse and direct those behaviours” (p. 1464). As a result, motivation has been studied a great deal in the leisure literature. More specifically, researchers have studied and compared the motivations of participants engaging in certain types of activities. For instance, Heckhausen (1989; as cited by Gnoth, 1997) noted that motives were based on the latent needs of the person. This in turn relates to motivation when speaking of a specific activity or behaviour, as it is meant to fulfil the needs of the person, whether consciously recognized or subconsciously driven. A number of studies have been conducted on motivation in relation to both volunteerism and volunteer tourism, and these are discussed in the next two sections.

2.3.1.1 Motivations in Non-Tourism Related Volunteering

There have been many studies assessing the motivations of volunteers. Some authors, such as Bjerneld, Lindmark, McSpadden, and Garrett (2006), have linked motivation in volunteers to Maslow's (1973) hierarchy of needs. Most commonly, this link locates the optimal volunteers near the top of Maslow's pyramid at the time in which they volunteer (Bjerneld et al., 2006). In this model, the top of the pyramid is a point at which one strives for the fulfilment of one's potential after one's basic needs are met. This means that one strives for the fulfilment of potential only after psychological, social and esteem related needs have been met and safety related concerns addressed, such as safe food, water and lodging (Bjerneld et al., 2006).

However, when looking at adventure tourism and other forms of tourism one can see that the fulfilment of some of these basic needs may be challenged in pursuit of a higher goal (Walle, 1997, as cited in Weber, 2001). For example, food preparation and safety standards may differ from one's country of residence to a different country, but some people choose to engage in tourism regardless of such risks. Some risks can be minimized, though not eliminated, through various means, including: participation in relatively stable areas; the use of programs that include food and lodging; and engaging in programs with safety precautions undertaken by the organization providing the experience. In fact, in the case of adventure tourists, "research has been shown that they are very much concerned with safety, reflected in the meticulous preparation of their equipment, the careful examination of environmental conditions, or in a commercial setting in the selection of experienced operators (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993; Ewert 1994; Hall & McArthur, 1994)" (as cited by Weber, 2001, p. 362).

Carlo, Okun, Knight, and de Guzman (2005), found that volunteers tended to be more extroverted and agreeable. They also found that the behaviours of the volunteers with these traits were highly influenced by motivations, thus selecting certain programs based on their specific motivations, while those with different traits may not have been as strongly influenced. Millette and Gagne (2008) found that intrinsic motivations made a large difference in the positions selected by the participant. Intrinsic motivations by definition are those motivations that drive a person to engage in a particular behaviour for reasons within oneself, such as spirituality or altruism (Cappellari & Turatti, 2004). Millette and Gagne found that intrinsic motivations are most closely linked to volunteer position characteristics, such as being able to learn new skills or apply knowledge in a way that would assist in achieving a sense of mastery, and that such correlations can result in increases in interest and enjoyment of the work by volunteers. However, extrinsic or controlled motivations did not show such a difference in placement selection. To clarify, extrinsic motivations are those that

have outside influences, such as being given stipends/monetary incentives or public recognition, with which one can gain the praise of others (Cappellari & Turatti).

While volunteering can assist in both providing sources of funding and a supply of cheap, or even free, labour some important issues may arise (Caudron, 1994; Rawlins & Houska, 1986). One of the most frequent problems faced by volunteer organizations is high turnover rates (Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006; Millette & Gagne, 2008). Often, positive expectations relate to the underlying motivations of the person, and if such expectations are not met, high levels of dissatisfaction occur. In turn, higher levels of dissatisfaction lead to an increased probability of departure (Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006). This could be affected by motivations as some volunteer programs may require long term commitments from organizations or even individuals (Curtale *et al.*, 1995).

Thus, learning what motivates people, based upon what they want and/or expect in their experience is important for understanding volunteer tourism. Adapting volunteer positions based upon these expectations and/or wants may then help to make this group more stable and urge people to continue their involvement (Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary *et al.*, 1998; Millette & Gagne, 2008; Orpen, 1979).

As stated by Stewart and Weinstein (1997), “[s]etting structure and aims, motivations for volunteering, and aspects of efficacy have been variables of interest in much of the participation literature” (p. 810). However, as they argue further, we must consider environment, characteristics of volunteers and their motivations and expectations in conjunction, “rather than viewing setting or volunteer characteristics as independent predictors of participation” (p. 810).

A number of specific motivations for volunteering have been identified through various studies. For instance, Bjerneld *et al.* (2006), found that motivations offered by humanitarian workers included: community and coherence; recognition and self-esteem; professional competence and mastery; wanting to contribute; development of skills; and a search for the ‘new’. Similar results were shown in studies by Anderson and Moore (1978) as well as Liao-Troth and Dunn (1999).

Additionally, there exist relational/social motives, altruism, and ‘protective’ motives for participation in volunteer activities in addition to motives relating to one’s values, learning, and skill development (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Prouteau & Wolff, 2008; Rawlins & Houska, 1986; Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). The protective motive was explained by Clary and Snyder as a motive to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt or others relating to personal issues. In a study by Hayes (2002), the relational/social motivation was reinforced in a discussion of building social capital, which refers to the building of networks and connections to others, whilst identifying an additional motivation for volunteering. Added to this list of potential motivations is the idea that religion and/or

spirituality are related to one's decision to participate in volunteer activity, sometimes out of a sense of obligation (Hayes, 2002; Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000).

The motivations noted above could be linked in a variety of ways, as each person may have any number of motivations at a given time, some of which they may not even realize. For example, spirituality can be linked to values as one's values may have been developed in a spiritual setting under the guidelines of a specific religion. Additionally, a sense of obligation, which was mentioned in conjunction with spirituality by Hayes (2002), could be construed as a result of the values of that person.

Finally, as noted by Cappellari and Turatti (2004), while some motivations can be intrinsic others are extrinsic. To re-iterate an earlier point, intrinsic motivations are those that drive a person to engage in a particular behaviour for reasons within oneself, such as spirituality or altruism (Cappellari & Turatti, 2004). Alternately, extrinsic motivations are those that have outside influences, such as monetary incentives or public recognition (Cappellari & Turatti). Extrinsic motivators have been found in some cases to detract from one's motivations to do an activity (Mesch *et al.*, 1998). As Mesch *et al.*, argue, this is particularly the case if later a person is asked to do the same activity without some form of remuneration. Thus, one must keep in mind that motivations can be used to benefit participants and recipients, particularly if activities are adapted properly to meet the needs of the people involved (Millette & Gange, 2008). While this is the case, as Millette and Gange argue, they can also have no effect on the individual or even have negative effects if the person's expectations are not fulfilled.

In summary, motivations to volunteer are widely varied, ranging from intrinsic to extrinsic, and include altruism, spirituality, skill development, obligation and a variety of others. Many of these motivations can be seen in volunteer tourism in addition to those motivations introduced when adding the travel element. These are discussed further in the next two sections.

2.3.1.2 Motivations in Volunteer Tourism

The motivations of volunteer tourists are possibly the most studied aspect of the volunteer tourism niche (Coghlan, 2008). The motivations most commonly cited for ecologically or research-driven volunteering include: cultural immersion/learning; development of skills; camaraderie/social benefits; the feeling of 'making a difference'; and safety whilst engaged in such activity (Brightsmith, *et al.*, 2008; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Wearing, 2001). Values of volunteers identified by Campbell and Smith (2006) relating to sea turtle conservation include: conservation in general, scientific advancement/increase in knowledge, the aesthetic, humanistic relating to the emotional ties to a place or species, experiential, existence value, intrinsic rewards, and spiritual value. Motivations of

humanitarian-based volunteering in other studies include: altruism; experiencing a different culture; search for meaning; learning; challenge; adventure; helping others; development of skill; social benefits; and 'giving something back' (Hayes, 2002; Hudson & Inkson, 2006).

Looking at travel motivations in general, researchers have concluded that many motivations come into play. Ory and Mokhtarian (2005) suggest that motivations for travel include: adventure-seeking; variety-seeking; independence; status; buffer (a gap between different areas, such as work and home); exposure to environment; scenery and amenities; synergy (ability to do one or more things at once); escape; curiosity; conquest; and physical exercise. As one may notice, there are areas of overlap between some of these motivations and those found in general volunteering literature. There is even more overlap found between the general travel motivations noted above and those cited regarding volunteer tourists specifically.

Hudson and Inkson (2006) allude to motivations for participation through the use of a metaphor called the 'hero's adventure'. In this model a person progresses from being a 'normal' citizen and then is 'called to action' either based upon timing or need and ability to assist. This is then typically followed by some assistance from 'helpers' leading to 'victory over challenge', returning with some sign of the victory and a sense of mastery over 'two worlds' (Hudson & Inkson, 2006). This sense of mastery of a different environment from where one typically is located has also been referred to as an idea of "global citizenship" (McGehee & Santos, 2005). This somewhat romanticised view seems to be echoed, to a lesser degree, in other articles relating to this topic (Sin, 2009). Unfortunately, there has not been much research assessing the views of the residents of the areas into which these 'heroes' fly in to help. There has been some study of the effects of volunteering in local communities in which the people being 'helped' have appeared to have a stronger voice, mostly to let planners know what is or is not working for the betterment of the community, but little to no literature regarding resident opinions and/or needs currently exists in volunteer tourism studies (Sin, 2009).

In a recent study Sin (2009) found that the most common motivation for volunteer tourists was to travel rather than altruism. Up to this point, altruism was commonly thought to be the main driver for engaging in such an activity. Sin determined that wanting to contribute was another common response, as well as self-challenge, and, perhaps unexpectedly, convenience. Participants in Sin's study wanted to get away and felt it was a good opportunity to do many things at once. Altruism, or 'wanting to contribute', was often referred to in conjunction with learning and benefiting others and themselves.

In this case, self-challenge came in the form of the participants taking part in such an experience in order to see if they "could do it" (Sin, 2009, p. 490). For example, a volunteer tourist

goes to Africa to volunteer in a place away from their home environment. Such an endeavour is something new in terms of experience and thus tests their ability to succeed in both that place and that role. Also, in terms of the motive of convenience noted by Sin, this referred to access and funding available to volunteer tourists for them to participate. The author then went on to explain that many of the locales in which volunteer tourism occurs are relatively inaccessible aside from volunteer experiences. And, finally, that there are often grants and subsidies that are given to volunteer workers in such situations (Sin). The next section discusses further the element of travel as a motivator for participation in volunteer tourism as suggested by Sin above.

2.3.1.3 Distance as a Deal-Breaker in Volunteer Tourism Participation

Travel distance is likely the most obvious differentiating factor between volunteering in a non-tourism setting and volunteering in a tourism setting. In terms of tourism, and volunteer tourism particularly, distance is very important in the decision to travel “because of the clearly inherent spatial dimension of tourist destination choice” (Nicolau, 2008, p. 43). This is also one of the things that may most greatly affect choices to volunteer in one location rather than another, such as expenses for transportation and differences in culture. Distance also has various costs associated with it, which can be temporal, physical, or monetary (Nicolau, 2008). The distance travelled could be related to expectations as there may be greater expectations in terms of experiencing cultural difference and contrast the farther one travels. Additionally, there is potential for added costs for such travel which may increase the expectations of the volunteers.

Volunteer tourists may face costs similar to those of the average tourist, but may also have additional organizational/program costs. Often monetary costs grow the farther one travels due to a variety of factors. Additionally, other factors may increase the non-monetary value of distance. For example if a person wanted to experience a different culture they may see travelling farther away as providing a more valuable experience than if they stayed in their own city (Nicolau, 2008). Whether travel distance is positively or negatively associated with an experience is highly dependent upon the person’s motivations for taking part in that activity and/or travel (Ory & Mokhtarian, 2005).

Thus, volunteer tourism is a form of alternative tourism that has received growing attention. It is seen to be a more beneficial form of tourism than traditional tourism as it is seen to offer greater assistance to host communities. There are many characteristics shared by volunteer tourists, such as being from westernized countries, being relatively well educated, and having a general affiliation with religion, particularly Christian denominations. As one may surmise, volunteer tourists often choose to participate in such experiences for a variety of reasons, typically referred to as motivations and were discussed in this chapter.

Motivations are closely linked to expectations. Expectations relate to anticipated outcomes of choices based upon available information. Motives are what drives a person to select one option over another based upon the expectations of that product, destination, or program. In the case of volunteer tourism, expectations are formed based upon information gathered and are used to determine which experience will best fulfill the motivations of the potential participant, thus leading to the selection of a specific program. As an integral part of this pairing expectations are further discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 Expectations

To date there is not much academic literature relating to expectations in relation to volunteer tourism, though there have been some mentions of expectations by Wearing (2001), Caissie and Halpenny (2003), and, more recently Chen and Chen (2010) and Lo and Lee (2011). Expectations are generally considered to be the anticipated results of a choice made based upon information gathered by the individual.

As noted above, Wearing (2001) is one author who has referred to the concept of expectations with regards to volunteer tourism. However, while making reference to expectations he has not greatly expanded on the topic. For instance, while he noted a strong expectation by volunteers of seeing nature on a conservation based volunteer project the reference to expectations ceases there (2001). Another such reference to expectations suggests that in ecotourism, “although initial expectations of the tourist may not be met, the ecotourist may not, however be entirely disappointed with the expedition” (Wearing, 2001, p. 73). At this point it should be re-iterated that in his 2001 book, ecotourism was often correlated with volunteer tourism, and so this statement may also be considered to apply to volunteer tourism. Again he does not elaborate on the concept of expectations, leaving the reader to fill in the gaps. In this specific example it could mean that expectations are more malleable in the case of ecotourism and/or volunteer tourism than in other tourism niches or that there simply is no definitive information as the expectations of volunteer tourism have not been a focus. Also information regarding how such initial expectations were developed, and what, if any, other specific expectations were held by the participants were not noted in his work.

Later Chen and Chen (2010) conducted a study intended to explore “the expectations and motivations of international volunteer tourism in an eastern developing country” (p.440). In this article by Chen and Chen it appears that the connection between expectations and motivations are generally assumed with regards to the literature. They provide limited reference to expectations with only one reference from past literature relating to expectations. This reference cited the study by

Caissie and Halpenny (2003), reporting that in the study “the participants focused more on self than altruistic reasons and expected their trip not only to fulfill a higher need such as self-actualization but also the basic needs of relaxation and stimulation” (Chen & Chen, 2010, p. 436). In the results of Chen and Chen’s study they noted that most expectations “were related to the mission of the expedition” (p.440).

As such, explanations and the study of expectations appear limited in volunteer tourism literature. Lo and Lee (2011) after concluding a motivations based study suggest a need for further study regarding expectations, saying that “studies should be conducted to investigate the expectations and perceptions of the residents of the host communities being visited by volunteer tourists and how different parties, including governments, NGOs, and the local communities, can make this travel experience a “win-win” situation for the different stakeholders” (p. 333). It is the goal of this study to try to fill in some of these gaps.

As noted earlier, motivations for participation are more commonly reported in the volunteer tourism literature than expectations and, as a result, there is a good deal of literature relating to the motivations of volunteer tourists as evidenced in the previous section. As such motivations are used in this study to create points of reference/links to the past literature. However, while motivations do relate in some ways to the expectations of tourists, they do not represent the entire picture. Thus adding more information to the existing body of literature regarding expectations and different stakeholder perspectives in volunteer tourism are the major goals of this study.

As introduced above, expectations are the anticipated results of a choice made based upon the information gathered by an individual. As such, expectations are very dependent upon the information available to that individual (Hamer, 2006; Licata, Chakraborty, & Krishnan, 2008). Information on tourism, destinations and programs can come from a variety of means, such as pamphlets, articles, guides, books, television programs, and, particularly in the case of volunteer tourism, word-of-mouth from other participants (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

Expectation levels vary among individuals based upon the information gathered and the ways in which they compile and use the information received (Wearing, 2001). If very little information reaches the travelers, they may not have accurate or realistic expectations of an experience. However, if inundated with resource materials, they may form very specific expectations. This can be important, as expectations are often closely linked to the satisfaction of a person or group in regards to a product or service (Hamer, 2006).

The concept of ranges of acceptable outcomes is another important idea to note for this study. Ranges of acceptable outcomes have also been referred to as ‘adaptation levels’. Adaptation level is a concept whereby one’s expectations are informed by one’s past experience (Petty & Cacioppo,

1981). Petty and Cacioppo (1981) use an example of submerging your hand in cold water and leaving it there for some time to describe this phenomenon. Eventually your hand adapts to the cold water and starts to feel neutral or normal rather than cold as it had before. After the earlier point of reference was made (the cold water being neutral) it would further impact your judgement on the temperatures of subsequent water samples, called the contrast effect. The authors also argue that this is not only related to physical stimuli, but also in social stimuli, such as persuasive materials like advertisements. Thus, the more experience the participant has, the narrower the range of acceptable outcomes, and there is likely less fluctuation of expectations over the duration of the current program than first time participants.

To make this point more clear: consider two individuals who experience the same event. Perhaps they both devoted two weeks to assist with a volunteer project. One individual's positive expectations were met while the other's was not. The individual whose positive expectations were met will likely be more satisfied with the experience (Oliver, 1997). This match (or mis-match) of expectations to outcomes can also be referred to as expectation confirmation or disconfirmation (Shrivastava, 1983). This could happen in a variety of ways. For example, some people may have built up unrealistic expectations regarding the volunteer work that they would be doing, expecting to see major changes in the short time span that they are volunteering. Thus these individuals may experience some dissatisfaction when things do not change as much as they had anticipated. While this may be the case, it is possible that more experienced volunteers might expect a slower rate of change and be happy with the same observed outcomes. This suggests that different participants may hold different ranges of acceptable outcomes and report different satisfaction levels with the same experience. This would theoretically lead the participants experienced with volunteer tourism to have more realistic expectations than those with less experience/first-hand knowledge, which was also looked into with this study. This will be discussed further later in the paper in respect to the data obtained.

Expectations are very much tied to satisfaction (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). It has been shown that, "[s]atisfied customers are more likely to return and make positive word-of mouth recommendations" (Wong & Kwong, 2004, p. 582). This is important, as Yoon and Uysal (2005) argue; word-of-mouth promotion tends to be one of the most sought after forms of information for potential travellers. This is particularly significant for volunteer tourism organizations as Lyons and Wearing argue (2008), word-of-mouth promotion is one of the most common forms of promotion for this type of tourism.

In service-oriented industries, such as tourism, service quality plays a large role. As this project is focused on one branch of tourism, specifically volunteer tourism, and also relates to

expectations and satisfaction, major components in service quality, the general concept of service quality is important for this paper. However, the focus is on those two main components of expectations and satisfaction and this is also reflected in the paper. O'Neill, Getz, and Carlsen (1999) make this connection simply, saying, "If expectations are met, service quality is perceived to be satisfactory; if unmet, less than satisfactory; if exceeded, more than satisfactory" (p. 159). Ensuring the satisfaction of the users would be in the best interest of the organization, which, in turn, makes realistic expectations important. Thus building expectations that closely resemble the outcomes in reality can be considered crucial. This being considered, the gap between expectations and outcomes should not be very large, as satisfaction is considered by some to relate to expectations being confirmed through the performance (Hamer, 2006). In the sports tourism literature it is made clear that organizers of sports tourism events want the expectations of both the host community and the potential tourists to be fairly accurate in order to best serve all parties (Gibson, 1998; O'Neill, Getz & Carlsen; Standeven, 1998; Wright, 2007).

Recently, Licata, Chakraborty and Krishnan (2008) found that expectations can change over "the service purchase experience" (p. 176), meaning that expectation may change over the duration of a program or service. As volunteer tourism happens over a set amount of time, this could play a role in the expectations of people at the time of interaction, reinforcing the need to see how expectations may have changed over the course of the volunteer tourism experience, particularly from the various stakeholder perspectives, as some have longer periods of exposure to the impacts of the program than others. One of the underlying motivations for my study was to see what the balance is between the expectations of the different parties involved in volunteer tourism so that benefits outweigh the costs for all affected.

Petty is a well-known author in the field of expectations research, as well as in regards to attitude formation, and persuasion, all of which play a large role in the decision making process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). As noted earlier, past experience can greatly inform and have an effect on one's expectations. This can be as simple as deciding whether the temperature of water is hot or cold or if a tourist's experience is good or bad based upon what they have experienced in the past. Petty and Cacioppo call this the 'Adaptation level approach' (p. 95), and thus it is important to look at the participant's experience levels, as well as what the actual expectations of a program or service are in order to best understand the range of acceptable outcomes for a participant. This range of acceptable outcomes can vary with the amount of information available to the participant. If an individual has a great deal of experience and information regarding a product or service they will have a very specific and narrower range of expectations when compared to a person with less information and/or experience (Petty & Cacioppo). If the outcomes fall outside the range of expectations than the

participant is likely to experience some dissatisfaction with the product or service (Petty & Cacioppo).

Additionally, it is important to understand the expectations of participants, both those formed as a result of their motivation and those created from the image portrayed by an organization (Coghlan, 2008). This is important because they may find that they are displeased with an experience because of a mismatch between the actual services and/or outcomes of the organization/trip and their motivations and their expectations. This may, in turn, cause some reduction in the time and quality of assistance that the participants are willing to give (Basinger, 1998; Coghlan, 2008; Darwall & Dulvy, 1996). While this is the case, as Hudson and Inkson (2006) have noted, volunteers in such experiences tend to be at a point of change; that they are driven by various internal values and motivations, are self-directed but are flexible/adaptable and are open to the 'new'. Thus, such information may be helpful in determining some of the underlying expectations of volunteers which inform their choices to participate in a particular program (based upon the anticipated outcomes/results of the program). Such ideas were used in developing some of the questions used in this study to try to identify any underlying motivations and/or expectations that the participants may have had about their volunteer tourism experience.

Finally, research has shown that the experiences that volunteer tourists have may be influenced a good deal by the leaders or 'guides' of their trip (Coghlan, 2008; Geva & Goldman, 1991). This can impact the choices of volunteers to participate again in such an experience. These guides are the people with whom they interact daily on projects and with which they develop a rapport. It is important that such leaders be trained to identify what motivations and expectations that people have and ways in which one can adapt the experience in order to produce the best result and meet the expectations of all involved (Coghlan, 2008). This would possibly help identify issues that may arise ahead of time and thus may be able to better prepare and develop realistic expectations.

In summary, people commonly make choices based upon their expectations. They choose products, programs and services that are expected to fulfill their needs and/or wants. As such, tourists generally expect programs and organizations to supply them with the specific supplies and services necessary for their planned experience. Meeting or exceeding positive expectations is an important part of ensuring the satisfaction of those involved, whether through provision of specific facilities or services.

Now, moving forward, the provision of such services and facilities may be found to influence and/or have an impact upon the community where the tourism activity is occurring. As existing literature on tourism impacts makes clear, the impacts of tourism can be both positive and negative.

These issues/impacts are important to consider in volunteer tourism and are discussed in the next section.

2.4 Tourism Impacts

Tourism can have an impact on many aspects of life in a host community. These impacts can be social, cultural, economic, environmental, and/or any combination of these. Further, they can be positive or negative or a combination of the two. Many changes occur as a result of the initial tourism development, such as the displacement of locals, but some effects are more long-term and related to the continued presence of the tourism industry and the tourists themselves.

There are many differing opinions regarding whether tourism is a positive or negative force, but in most situations it is a mix where there are trade-offs between the positive and negative effects. The governments of many countries look to tourism development because of the economic benefits tourism is seen to provide. This means that unfortunately “the negative physical, social and cultural impacts are often ignored by host communities and operators pursuing economic returns” (Wearing, 2001, p. 38). This often results in the degradation of the natural environment, social environment and the culture of the host community (Harrison, 2001). The literature on tourism impacts is vast, but for the purposes of this study, which was set in Ghana, I will focus on literature addressing tourism impacts in developing nations.

2.4.1 Impacts of Tourism in Developing Nations

There is much debate over the terms ‘developing’, ‘less developed’, and ‘underdeveloped’ when it comes to classifying countries/nations (Harrison, 2001). The concept of developing nations is a residual one that typically refers to countries that have low to medium incomes in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and that may not have all of the essential services needed for their citizens, and resulting in a low position on the “Human Development Index” as designated by the United Nations Development Programme (Harrison, 2001). As such, there are countries that are highly dependent on variable industries, such as tourism, for employment. However, this means the economic sector can be relatively unstable because such industries experience high levels of fluctuation as they are dependent on a multitude of variables. For example, tourism destinations can be greatly affected by prices, weather, terrorism, disasters, media, and prevailing social norms.

Harrison (2001) identifies a number of different qualities that can be considered part of the definition of a less developed nation, but notes that these are often not consistent, though he acknowledges one criterion based upon rankings set by the World Bank is commonly used. This criterion is “to regard as ‘developing’ or ‘less developed’ all countries listed by the World Bank as

not falling into the ‘high income’ category” (p. 9). As it appears the most consistent criterion, I will be using it to define less developed/developing nations for the purposes of this study.

Tourism can be extremely important in the economies of developing nations and can change the ways people operate as they attempt to entice visitors to their nation. As a result, tourism development must be considered carefully. In developing nations, the impacts of tourism are also often more stark than in more developed areas (Harrison, 2001). There is often a more distinct difference between the visitor (tourist) and local (persons in the host community). There are also differences in power and equality that must be addressed in terms of tourism in developing nations, as Harrison argues, there is often a highly imbalanced power relationship between the visitor and the host. He argues further,

When acknowledging the cultural divide [between the visitor and host], it is important to identify the ‘owners’ of a country, to ask who controls the interpretation of its heritage, how its indigenous people and other minorities are portrayed, and who protects, controls or sells culture to the tourist. (p. 49)

There are also imbalances in the environment that are experienced due to tourism, both in the natural environment and the human/built environment. Many areas may experience environmental degradation due to tourism development and practice (Harrison, 2001). Because it often comes with some economic benefit, the concern for the changes to the natural environment due to tourism are often overlooked because of the power of the economic benefits, which may, unfortunately cause the environmental health of a community to be sacrificed (Harrison).

Harrison (2001) also refers to “the consumption gap” (p.50), which relates to inequalities faced by the host community as it works to meet the needs of the visitor ahead of the needs of the residents. For example, the flow of water may be redirected into tourist areas, away from the residents who need it for their livelihoods and basic survival, or in other areas, residents may be restricted from access to beaches and other areas that were once public, thus, succumbing to the wants of the visitor (Harrison).

One term often used in discussions of impacts in tourism literature is globalization. As defined by Pizarro, Wei, and Banerjee, (2003) globalization is, “the unrestricted movements of money, people, information, and culture – and their agency effects” (p. 112). This means a free flow of various components of society from one cultural/social group to another. This commonly leads to discussions of an impact of tourism called ‘cultural cannibalism’ as it has been used by Wearing (2001), in that one culture loses something of its culture and adopts the culture of the larger/more powerful society. In the case of developing nations, the flow in some of these areas appears particularly uni-directional. Assimilation is a term referring to another process by which the foreign becomes familiar and is then integrated into the culture. In the context of tourism, this term captures

the extent to which a host culture may change to reflect more of the visitor's culture over time (Harrison, 2001).

Another impact of tourism that is particularly relevant to the case of developing nations is economic leakage. Leakage occurs when the money spent by the tourist in the host community goes almost immediately back out of the host community. In essence, tourists give their money to large, foreign-owned businesses as it is transferred back to the main business centers of those large corporations, which are typically located in the 'developed' world (Wearing, 2001). This happens because outside investment interests often develop the large hotels and tourism infrastructure in developing countries and unless the state takes an active role to control the amount of investment by outside interests, leakage is a constant issue (Harrison, 2001). While this is a serious concern, there is some benefit to having developments there as jobs are created for locals that may provide for them better than 'traditional' means, such as farming (Harrison, 2001). Nonetheless, economic leakage means that the money spent at a host destination may not really stay in the location or go to the people who likely need it the most.

To reiterate, tourism, as Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) argue, "...can bring great benefits, but it can also bring social problems. [...] What has to be done is to balance the benefits and costs to come up with the best cost/benefit result" (p. 32).

2.4.2 Impacts of Volunteer Tourism

There are a variety of potential impacts that may be particular to volunteer tourism. Because of the close contact to the host community that typifies this type of experience, the impacts may be more strongly felt than in other forms of tourism (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001). As noted earlier, volunteer tourism can be one of the first types of tourism undertaken in an area, and because of this, as Wearing argues, there may be more impacts than in mass tourism developments. The people of the host community may not know what to expect of the visitor, and the visitor may also not know much of the host community thus potentially having some cross-cultural clashes/misunderstandings.

The development of volunteer tourism has been met with a great deal of optimism, as people see this as a form of tourism that can benefit both the community and the visitor (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Guttentag, 2009; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001). Perhaps as a result of the optimism generated by the growing interest of tourists to participate in volunteer activities while on vacation, there has been less criticism than is typically assigned to tourism development (Guttentag, 2009; Woosnam & Lee, 2011). Of course, as previously stated, there are both positive and negative effects that volunteer tourism can have on a community.

Guttentag (2009) noted some of the commonly cited positive benefits of volunteer tourism, including: work that is completed by volunteers, revenues that can be generated through volunteer tourism, environmental conservation is typically promoted, personal growth of the volunteers, and “the intercultural experience involving volunteers and hosts that can foster a better understanding between cultures” (p. 539; see also Lyons & Wearing, 2008; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001).

Guttentag (2009) also highlights some of the potential negative impacts that volunteer tourism can have upon a host community. Some of these negative impacts include: neglecting the desires of locals, unsatisfactory work and/or hindering work process, fewer employment opportunities for locals, the “promotion of dependency”, and “an instigation of cultural changes, caused by the demonstration effect and the actions of short term missionaries” (p. 537). Add to these the potential for strengthening cultural stereotypes rather than encouraging and/or fostering cross-cultural understanding (Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2005; Sin 2010). Woosnam and Lee (2011) suggest the use of the concept of social distance to assess differences between the host and visitor in further study to try to mitigate such socio-cultural related effects. Such effects to be mitigated including culturally based mis-understandings between the host and guest in volunteer tourism activities, as noted earlier by: Raymond and Hall; Simpson; and Sin. Additionally, Raymond and Hall note that while there is potential for this form of tourism to be a more responsible form of travel, “it cannot be assumed that cross-cultural understanding automatically results from sending individuals to participate in [volunteer tourism programs]” (p.541). Further, they conclude with the caution that such programs must be “carefully developed and managed” (p.541); suggesting that cross-cultural understanding may be possible in volunteer tourism pursuits, if it is made a goal of this form of tourism “rather than a by-product” (p. 530).

Lyons and Wearing (2008) note concerns regarding the potential for commodification. Commodification (also referred to as commoditization) is typically referred to as a process by which a monetary value is assigned to a cultural item and/or activity. Lyons and Wearing focus on the potential for the commodification of volunteer tourism and argue that volunteer tourism may become more commercialized, as larger operations develop and become more profit-driven (Lyons & Wearing). This concept of the commercialization of volunteer tourism being similar to the changes seen in ecotourism in the past 20 years, as noted in the alternative tourism literature. Harrison (2001) notes concerns about the effects of capitalization on tourism, particularly commodification, which can, in turn, lead to changes in traditional items or practices to suit the wants/needs of the consumer.

Lyons and Wearing (2008) also note a ‘blurring of the boundaries’ between volunteering, stipend volunteering and paid volunteering, as there are now programs offering varying monetary

compensations for volunteering. This could be problematic because this could further push away the potential for jobs by people in the host community, if the number of volunteers is allowed to increase to any great degree. Additionally, the concept of paid volunteering could introduce a 'new' group of volunteers with a potentially different attitude set, which could be positive or negative dependent upon the manner in which it is conducted. As noted in the volunteerism literature, people often have different motivations if they are (or are not) paid to do such work-like pursuits.

Wearing (2001) notes a number of impacts that could come from volunteer tourism on the host community, including power inequalities between host communities and the 'visitor', the consumption of community resources for tourism, the degradation of the natural environment, and the high dependency on some imported goods, which can lead to economic leakage. However, he also describes positive impacts, such as community involvement and the promotion of sustainable development. Wearing encourages the development of sustainable tourism initiatives, which, by their nature, can be sustained for long periods of time with little to no damage to the natural, social, and/or cultural environments. Additionally, he stresses the importance of community involvement in development, while acknowledging some of the challenges faced by such involvement.

Wearing (2001) does note that though it is recognized that tourism can pose a threat to the well-being of a community, if it is managed properly it can "assist in efforts to maintain and enhance their environments" (p. 140). However, there is still not much known about what the effects of volunteer tourism actually are on a community. For instance, Guttentag's negative impacts are more theoretical in nature and there has not been any study on the long-term effects of volunteer tourism on a community.

Recently McGehee and Andereck (2009) conducted a study with local residents in Tijuana, Mexico to determine the views of the locals there. Their results showed that those with the most perceived personal benefit from volunteer tourism saw the effects more positively than those who did not personally gain from it. This suggests that a broad array of respondents from all groups may be necessary in future studies to fully comprehend both the positive and negative effects on a host community.

Finally, Guttentag (2009) although quite critical of this form of tourism, explicitly states:

[d]espite the critical stance that this paper takes, it should not be misconstrued as an insinuation that volunteer tourism should be considered 'worse' than other forms of tourism. Rather, it is contended that all forms of tourism exhibit positive and negative characteristics, and should be viewed accordingly. (p. 538)

This is an area in need of further study, as it could be used to identify positive or negative impacts and thus, hopefully, help us to understand how we might resist development that is more

negative in nature before it becomes too established to be corrected. While this is beyond the bounds of my study, I hope my project helps to illuminate the connections between the different stakeholder groups in volunteer tourism as we all move toward development that takes these criticisms into account.

2.5 A Summary of the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to provide a brief discussion of the many concepts that have helped to shape this study. As has been shown, many authors have studied volunteerism. Tourism has also been a popular area of study as it has been engaged in for centuries. Volunteer tourism is considered to be a form of alternative tourism and has been gaining popularity in recent years, but there is not as much research on this niche of tourism as other forms. A link may be made between volunteer tourism, volunteering (without a travel/tourism component), and tourism as they can each be placed under the broader topic of leisure, including serious leisure.

Volunteering, also known as ‘planned helpfulness’, is undertaken for a variety of reasons, and many motivations appear common between different types of volunteers. Volunteer tourists comprise a somewhat unique group, but there may be similarities to other groups in regards to different aspects of the experiences that are created. Some of these areas of commonality could include: managing volunteers, living in or visiting different cultures and attempting to plan for the optimal benefit for all stakeholders involved, ranging from the residents to the volunteers.

Our understanding of what motivates people to become volunteer tourists can be linked with our knowledge about their expectations. This is especially important in terms of the roles of both the volunteers and organizations as participants often make choices based upon what programs or destinations that are most likely to fulfill their expectations, and ultimately shapes their motivations. Understanding the motivations and expectations of the different groups may be used to predict patterns of participation, and/or plan for optimal future development of volunteer tourism programs. It is important to recognize such similarities and differences and to use existing knowledge to assist in developing plans for the future.

One of the underlying goals of my project was to help build this knowledge base. Chapter Three provides a description of my research on stakeholder views of a volunteer tourism project in Ghana.

3.0 Methods

I used a qualitative study design for the purposes of this project. Qualitative approaches are helpful in conducting initial research in an area of interest, as one can probe more deeply into the opinions, thoughts, and views of the study participants than with traditional quantitative methods. In addition, there has been little to no study of the views of persons involved in, or affected by, volunteer tourism from multiple perspectives.

Because of this approach, I gained insight into not simply what the volunteers or people within the volunteer organizations thought (groups which have typically been focused upon in past research) but also the thoughts and opinions of the people of the host community regarding their experiences and their expectations of volunteers and volunteer tourism. Thus, as my focus was to explore this issue and to develop a fuller view of the experience of volunteer tourism, and as this is a relatively under-explored area, a qualitative design seemed most appropriate. This study focused on the expectations and experiences of volunteers, organizers, and hosts in one Ghanaian volunteer tourism project.

As was noted in the introduction, the main questions I wished to answer were:

1. What are the expectations of the volunteer tourism experience, as held by the four different stakeholder groups?
2. How are the expectations and experiences similar or different between the groups?
3. What are the implications of these similarities or differences?
4. What suggestions may be made to mitigate potential negative effects?

The main method of data collection was through one-on-one semi-structured interviews as well as field observations. The participants interviewed were purposely selected as they were considered to represent one of four different stakeholder groups: the volunteers, the people organizing volunteer experiences, people from the host community, and members of host families. Prior to engaging in data collection, I gained necessary approvals through a defence of my proposal and ethics applications. These approvals came both through the university and the Ghanaian government. After gaining ethics clearance and making arrangements I traveled to the study site to begin data collection.

I was in Ghana from January 2nd until February 10th, 2011 to conduct the research for this project. The interviews took place over a period of four weeks, from mid-January until shortly before my departure in early February. The interviews included a variety of questions relating to the different objectives set out in the introduction. The general questions used to guide the interviews can be found in Appendix A. Through an analysis of the data collected in the interviews, themes regarding the expectations of volunteer tourism from various vantage points were developed and they

are discussed in subsequent chapters. Observations during interpersonal interactions were recorded as supplementary information.

Confidentiality was ensured to the best of my ability, with a different pseudonym assigned to each participant that only I know. These pseudonyms were used in written documents and recordings wherever relevant and/or necessary. Additionally, only the participant and the research team have access to the specific participant's full interview records and other such materials.

Similarly to Sin (2009), I also participated in the volunteer program while on-site to conduct research. This helped me to gain access to the volunteers, the community, the organization, and host families as well as potentially offering additional insights into the experiences of the volunteers. I volunteered both in the orphanage of focus in this project, as well as teaching in a school. This also allowed me to observe interactions between the different stakeholder groups to a greater degree, as I not only interviewed but participated in a volunteering experience with all of the volunteers interviewed in this study. As such, I identify with the volunteers in many ways, including some of the sentiments expressed in the interviews.

In this chapter I identify the data collection methods used. One-on-one semi-structured interviews and the corresponding analysis comprised the brunt of the data collected. The processes by which the interview data was collected and then analyzed are described in *Section 3.1.1* and *Section 3.1.1.1* respectively. Other means of data collection and analysis, namely observation, are identified in *Section 3.1.2*. Finally, I talk about how these forms of data collection were used in combination in *Section 3.1.3*.

3.1 Data Collection Methods

3.1.1 Interviews

The first phase of research consisted of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. I conducted interviews with 20 participants. The interviews ranged in length from just over 13 minutes up to 37 minutes, though the average length was around 25 minutes. I interviewed approximately four to six individuals from each stakeholder group: five participants were volunteers, five were host family members, four participants were members of the broader community, and, finally, six interviews were conducted with individuals who were affiliated with the organizations. It was felt that this sample size should be large enough for the purposes of this study to account for any outliers in terms of responses, while not being too large to prevent speaking in-depth with those being interviewed. More information regarding the setting, placements, characteristics of the organizations and participants involved in the study are provided in Chapter Four.

This sample was drawn by means of a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. Initially it began with a few specific contacts made through one volunteer organization in Ghana. From that point, interviews were conducted based upon contact with participants through volunteering, as well as referrals from participants to other individuals whom they thought would be able to offer additional insights. This process worked well for most of the stakeholder groups, though the volunteers interviewed were all by means of convenience rather than a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. Most of the participants I recruited had a working knowledge of English, which was important as I was only able to conduct the interviews in English.

With the participants' agreement, the interviews were audio-recorded. They were later transcribed and then coded using electronic and manual means, which are further discussed later in this chapter. The analysis is based on the content of the interview transcripts. Additionally, I asked participants if they would engage in a second interview if any points came up during the initial analysis requiring further information or clarification. I only conducted one such additional interview with a participant regarding the concern of losing contact with volunteers as was noted by other host family participants. I had mistakenly neglected to ask about the concept during the initial interview and received an effusive response stressing the importance of the topic to that participant as well. This topic will be described in more detail in later discussion sections.

As noted by Creswell (2009), there are some weaknesses to using interviews. They can rely heavily on a single individual's opinion, which often is biased. For this study, however, what I wished to explore were the opinions and views of individuals and so this is not a weakness per se. Also, there were a number of interviews with different individuals to mitigate potential reliance upon one person's views and opinions.

Additionally, Creswell noted that interviews can take a long time, both in terms of gaining the trust of the participant and in actually conducting and transcribing the conversations. Nonetheless, interviews are very beneficial for gaining rich data and helping to develop a deeper understanding of the perspectives and thoughts of participants which was important in this study. Finally, Creswell noted that discussion can be influenced by the bias of the researcher. In particular, discussions may be guided by the wording of questions, body language, and any statements of affirmation or disagreement during the interview. While this can be true, I tried to be conscious of this and as such, any biases were identified and/or mitigated as much as possible. Such biases are also discussed and addressed in later discussions, particularly in regards to limitations of the study.

Some of the main reasons for my selection of participant interviews included strengths such as: gaining rich description of terms or ideas; an ability to probe areas of interest or nuances that may be briefly referred to that would not be possible in other methods; and, finally, that vulnerable persons

may feel more comfortable in a one-on-one situation rather than in a group and thus not only the opinions of the most vocal persons are heard and analyzed (Creswell, 2009). In light of these considerations, I used a semi-structured interview style in order to probe deeper into interesting concepts introduced by the participant's responses. I also conducted interviews in locations agreed upon with the participant in advance, in settings in which the participant was comfortable or familiar.

3.1.1.1 Interview Data Analysis

In order to analyze the information gained through the interviews, I coded the data. Coding "attach[es] labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distils data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3). In a study by Anderson and Shaw (1999), various means of coding, namely using manual means, keyword searches and the use of software were studied to determine the best mode of analysis. Their research showed that in the case of manual coding, there is potential for a strong researcher bias, but there are elements or themes that can be identified and further developed through the use of such coding that may not be identified in computerized methods. This is because computers, to date, do not have the same capabilities of the human mind to grasp underlying themes or similar concepts described in different ways meaning that some themes could be more easily missed if they are not immediately apparent using the computer software (Anderson & Shaw). To address these strengths and weaknesses, I used manual coding in conjunction with computerized means to code the data gathered in the study. I used NVivo particularly as it has been considered to reduce some of the bias of researchers (Anderson & Shaw).

While in the field, I started transcribing interviews and began manually coding interview data to form preliminary themes. After returning to Canada, I completed transcribing the remaining interviews and continued manually coding. This coding was generally done with the use of a combination of highlighters of different colours, post-it notes and comments (generally written in the margins) on hard copies of the interviews transcripts.

I then used computer software called NVivo to further breakdown/refine and/or define the themes that appeared in discussion. The process of coding on NVivo was based upon both key words and on the general concepts/ideas identified in discussions during interviews. Initial themes used in this coding were based upon themes that became apparent in the field and in the manual analysis described earlier. However, additional themes also became apparent in coding using the NVivo software.

After the coding the interview data in NVivo there were approximately 50 different minor or major themes that appeared, ranging from broad themes like planning, assessment, communication,

cultural differences, future plans and recommendations to more focused/narrow themes like achievement, accomplishment, volunteer motivations, orientation, finding an experience, and explanations of the organizational structure to name a few.

These 50 groups were then re-evaluated and groupings that showed a great deal of overlap, such as the themes of achievement and accomplishment noted above, were combined where appropriate. Additionally others not seen as pertinent to the focus of the study were also removed from the results, such as explanations of the organizational structure though some of the information was used in Chapter Four to provide some context for the reader. This process of combination and/or elimination reduced the number of themes to approximately 30. These remaining themes were then clustered based upon main themes made apparent by participants in the interview process and the subsequent analysis of interview data. These main themes related to: stages of the experience, cultural differences, communication and recommendations. As a result of the clustering, each main theme has a number of sub-themes or divisions. These are further explained and discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

3.1.2 Additional Data Collection and Analysis

Participant observations, particularly regarding responses to questions, were documented in addition to the aforementioned methods, though this was limited. The information generally referred to different emotional cues, including inflections of the voice/variance in pitch, or physical responses, such as smiles, laughter or long pauses while thinking about a response during interviews. Some of this was recorded on-site, with field notes in a notebook, noting a key word or phrase and associated response, but most frequently was recorded while transcribing interview data based upon the background sounds and/or tonal cues in the voice of the participant as well as my own recollection when possible. Field notes were generally written during interviews (when relating to the interview) or when I was alone after the completion of the day, though occasionally I would write observations while sitting on my own in the village at lunch (the writing in the latter two contexts regarding general observations in the orphanage or village).

Such documentation, and additional notes written during analysis, can be compared to the concept of memo-writing used in grounded theory, whereby the researcher writes preliminary notes about codes and comparisons drawn as well as any other ideas/concepts that emerge (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz argues that “through studying data, comparing them, and writing memos, we define ideas that best fit and interpret the data as tentative analytic categories” (p. 3). Additionally, I recorded reflections of my own experience as a volunteer in a journal. Some entries further express certain concepts/ideas identified based upon the volunteer interview data. Records of my

observations and reflections occasionally noted various interaction patterns between certain groups and/or individuals, such as any hostility or more positive cues in the interactions between individuals from different stakeholder groups, through body language, tone and the like, but were generally focused upon the interview participants.

The main limitation of observation is found in the biases of the researcher, in this case my preconceived constructs, but these pre-existing ideas/concepts have generally been identified and are discussed in conjunction with my findings in the section regarding limitations. The main benefit to this data collection method was that it was direct and offered some insight to underlying messages through the use of body language and such additional (unspoken) cues.

3.1.3 Relations between Data Sets and Summary of Methods

The primary data gathered came from interviews conducted in Ghana from mid-January to early-February 2011. I was in Ghana from January 2nd until February 10th, 2011 to volunteer and do research for this project. As noted above, 20 interviews were conducted with representatives of four different stakeholder groups. The information gathered during these interviews were then transcribed and later analyzed and categorized into main themes. The analysis and themes generated are further discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The results are primarily based upon the interview data, though observational data was occasionally noted when relevant. The observational data was mainly used to complement the interview data. Most frequently being used in the context of the interviews with regards to the use of humour or, occasionally, when participants expressed signs frustration or discomfort when recounting a situation that they had encountered.

4.0 Setting the Stage

The purpose of this section is to give a bit of context to the study. This information is presented in the following sections: *Location*, in which I discuss the specific locations where the research was conducted; *Participants*, in which I describe the individuals interviewed; and *Description of volunteer placement*, which presents a typical day in the volunteering experience at two different placements.

4.1 Location

As noted above, this study is based upon volunteer tourism experiences from the perspectives of four different stakeholder groups. The interviews and other data collection methods were conducted on site in Ghana based upon volunteer tourism in that country (see Map 1 to the right for the location of Ghana within Africa as marked by a darker shade). I will briefly summarize some key information about Ghana in this section in order to provide context for some of the discussion and/or findings of the study.



(Map 1 - CIA, 2011)

In terms of historical roots, what is now known as Ghana was previously known to the world as the Gold Coast (Ghana, 2011). The area now known as Ghana and parts of neighbouring countries were commonly known as the Gold Coast because of an abundance of gold and other mineral resources important in trade (Ghana, 2011). This was an important location for trade by the European groups that colonized the Gold Coast, because of the trade of valuable gold and minerals such as diamonds, but also of slaves in the height of slavery (Ghana, 2011).

Now, Ghana as it currently exists gained independence from the British in 1957. It has a population of approximately 24.2 million people (The World Bank, 2011). In terms of the Ghanaian economy, CIA World Factbook (2011) reports an estimated GDP per capita of \$2,500 (in US dollars) for 2010, which places Ghana in the 180th position of 227 countries or island nations recorded by that agency. It also reported an unemployment rate of approximately 11% in 2000 and stated that an estimated 28.5% of the Ghanaian population was below the poverty line in 2007 (CIA, 2011). The World Bank's country profile of Ghana reports a similar poverty ratio of 28.5% though notes a GPD

per capita of only \$1,190 (The World Bank, 2011). They rank the income level of Ghana to be “Low Middle” (The World Bank, 2011).

On this note, I would like to reiterate that, as reported in the literature review, the concept of developing nations is one that typically refers to countries that have low to medium incomes in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and thus may not have all of the essential services needed for their citizens (Harrison, 2001). Harrison (2001) also acknowledges that one criterion based upon rankings set by the World Bank is commonly used in categorizing a developing nation. This is “to regard as ‘developing’ or ‘less developed’ all countries listed by the World Bank as not falling into the ‘high income’ category” (Harrison, 200, p. 9), and is the criteria I am using in this study. In this case, Ghana has been reported by The World Bank to have an income level of “Low Medium” (The World Bank, 2011) and, as such, can be considered to be a developing nation.

In Ghana there are 10 different regions in the country with a variety of different tribal/ethnic groups comprising the population (CIA, 2011; Ghana, 2011). One Ghanaian government website summarizes the ethnic break-down as such:

The principal ethnic groups are the Akans who constitute about 45% of the population [and] is made up of the Ashanti, the Fanti, the Ahanta, the Guan, the Bonu, the Akyem, the Akwamu, the Kwahu, the Akwapim, the Sefwi and the Nzema; the Mole, Dagbani, 16% is made up of Nanumba, Dagbani, Mamprusi, Wala, Bruilsa, Frafra, Talensi and Kusasi; the Ewe, 13% made up of the Anlo, the Some, the Tongu and the Ewedome; the Ga-Adangbe, 9% made up of the Ga, the Shai or Adamgbe, the Ada and the Krobo or the Kloli; the Gurma, 4% and the Grusi, 2% made up of the Mo, the Sisala, the Kasena, the Vagala and the Tapolene. Living among the Ewe are non-Ewe speaking groups such as the Akpafu, the Lolobi, the Likpe, the Santrokofi, the Nkonya, the Avatime, the Logba and the Tafii. (Ghana, www.ghana50.gov.gh/history/, 2011)

English is the official language of the country (CIA, 2011; Ghana, 2011), but the primary language of citizens are often ethnically based, using languages specific to their regions. The region most of the study took place in had Twi as the primary dialect for its residents, though a number of locals spoke some English.

The cities of Accra (the capital of Ghana), Kumasi, and Tamale are all popular volunteer tourism destinations in Ghana (the location of these cities within Ghana can be seen on Map 2 on the next page). Additionally, there are a number of other cities and/or attractions that are enjoyed by volunteer tourists and other travelers throughout Ghana including others shown on Map 2. One such location is Cape Coast, which, at the height of British power, in the days of slavery, held the seat of power in Ghana only changing in 1877 when Accra was made the capital (Ghana, 2011). Before that

time Cape Coast Castle was a main location for the trade of goods from Ghana to other countries by the British and other European settlements, with such trade including gold, diamonds and slaves (Ghana, 2011). These location and others, such as National Parks, appeared to often be frequented by



(Map 2 - CIA, 2011)

volunteer tourists for short trips (while away from the cities in which their actual volunteer activities took place), while the three main cities noted above, Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale, played host to the majority of the volunteer activity.

The interviews for this study were conducted in two locations. The main study area was a village relatively close to Kumasi, located in the Ashanti region. The Ashanti region is a central region in Ghana, and is historically known to be a relatively affluent region of Ghana. The second location for interviews was in Tamale, which is known as the capital of the Northern region of Ghana.

I conducted interviews with 17 individuals in and around the village near Kumasi. I was looking for their ideas/input regarding volunteering, their placements and/or roles, and the organizations with which they were associated. In the village there was an orphanage for babies and young children (generally housing children up to 4 years of age but housing a few older children too). Most international volunteers coming into this village are placed in this orphanage for their volunteering. There are a number of international volunteer organizations who send volunteers to the orphanage, which is discussed later in the thesis.

Three additional interviews were conducted in Tamale. Two of these interviews were undertaken to glean any further insights, but also to see if the themes from the data gathered from the first location was applicable to volunteers in other areas of Ghana. The third interview was with a person who coordinated volunteers going to both villages mentioned in this study.

The local participants interviewed were mainly affiliated with the Akans, and more specifically the Ashanti, Fanti, Akyem and Akwamu ethnic groups identified earlier. This is likely because the majority of interviews took place in the heart of the Ashanti region and only one interview with a Ghanaian participant actually took place outside of that primary region. The next section provides a full description of the participants of this study.

4.2 Description of Study Participants

For the purposes of this study a total of 20 interviews were conducted. Again, and as described earlier, these participants came from one of four main stakeholder groups: volunteers, host families, community members, and organization members/employees. As a result, the breakdown of interviews with each stakeholder group are as follows: Five of these interviews were conducted with international volunteers (three in the Ashanti region and two in Tamale); Five interviews were conducted with people in the community in the Ashanti region who had hosted international volunteers; Four interviews were conducted with community members in the village in the Ashanti region; And, lastly, six interviews were conducted with people who worked for/with volunteer organizations at various levels. Five of the organization interviews took place in the Ashanti region while the remaining interview for the organization stakeholder group took place in Tamale. This individual had also lived in a village in the Ashanti region and coordinated volunteers for their volunteer organization (Organization A) in both locations.

One of the challenges that I had to address in this study was that a few of the participants had some difficulty with the English language. Participants generally did not have English as a first language, but most could speak it fluently. More specifically, English was the first language for only two participants and the other 18 had English as a secondary or tertiary language, though 14 of these spoke English quite fluently. The language barrier did occasionally prove challenging during four of the interviews. In order to get around this barrier, if the participant appeared to be having difficulties with a given question, I would either re-word the question or simply put an emphasis on key words in the question. If I did not understand or felt I may have misunderstood something the participant said, I would then repeat what they said back in the form of a question or rephrase what I understood to have them confirm my interpretation of what they were saying and/or to get further elaboration.

As noted in the methods section, pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the participants. These pseudonyms will be introduced in the following sections. For future reference, information regarding the characteristics of the different participants can be found in Appendix B in a table format. Further descriptions of the participants will follow based upon stakeholder group.

4.2.1 Volunteers

Five volunteers participated in this study. All five volunteers were female. All of the volunteers were independent travelers in that they were not travelling with a friend or family member they knew before starting the experience. These participants were volunteering with four separate organizations.

Stacey and Leanne were both from Germany, were in their early 20s and spoke German as their first language. Stacey also spoke English fluently. Leanne had a working knowledge of English

but occasionally experienced some difficulties. Anna was from Canada, was in her early 40's and her primary language was English. Danielle was from Holland, was in her mid 30's and her primary language was Dutch, but she spoke English fluently. Theresa was from the United States, was in her mid 20's and her primary language was English.

Table 1 – Volunteer Tourist Characteristics

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Country of Origin</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>First Language</i> | <i>Knowledge of English</i> | <i>Volunteer Placement</i> | <i>Location</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Stacey | Germany | Early 20's | German | Fluent | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Leanne | Germany | Early 20's | German | Working knowledge | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Anna | Canada | Early 40's | English | Fluent | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Danielle | Holland | Mid 30's | Dutch | Fluent | Orphanage & Teaching | Accra & Tamale |
| Theresa | USA | Early 20's | English | Fluent | Teaching | Tamale |

Anna, Stacey and Leanne were volunteers in the orphanage, which, as described earlier, is the main location for this project. This is also the orphanage where I volunteered for four weeks. This experience is discussed further in *Section 4.3*. For the interview with Leanne, to accommodate a potential language barrier, she asked that Stacey be present to help translate when/if necessary. She did not often require translation during the interview but did occasionally check her interpretation and her response with Stacey's assistance to ensure that she expressed herself as intended.

As noted above, I conducted two additional volunteer interviews with individuals located in Tamale, who expressed interest in my research. I asked them to participate in order to glean any further insights that they might offer and also, although to a lesser degree, to see if the themes developed from the initial volunteer interviews would be similar and/or could be applicable to a broader group. For these interviews I talked to Danielle, who helped in an orphanage in Accra, and Theresa, who taught school children in a village outside of Tamale. Additionally, Danielle and I had also joined Theresa for approximately a week of volunteering as teachers in the village outside of Tamale. These experiences are discussed further in *Section 4.3*. Though the placements were different from those in the orphanage in the Ashanti region, either in nature and/or location, many similar themes did emerge over the course of our discussions. Such similarities are noted in the results and analysis section, but the focus of the study remains around the volunteer organizations in the village in the Ashanti region (near Kumasi).

4.2.2 Community Members

Four community members were interviewed. These individuals were not directly involved in hosting volunteers nor did they work with an international volunteer organization. Two were local religious leaders of different religious denominations (Peter and Walter). The other two were employees in a business frequented by a number of the international volunteers in the community (Ernest and Albert). All individuals were male. Three, Ernest, Albert, and Walter were between the ages of 20 and 40, while Peter was likely in his 50s.

Table 2 – Community Member Characteristics

| <i>Pseudonym</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Role in Community</i> | <i>Interactions with Volunteers (Frequency)</i> | <i>Knowledge of English</i> |
|------------------|------------|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Peter | 50-60 | Religious Leader | Infrequent | Fluent |
| Walter | 30-40 | Religious Leader | Rarely | Fluent |
| Ernest | 20-30 | Wait-staff at Restaurant | Frequent | Working Knowledge |
| Albert | 20-30 | Wait-staff at Restaurant | Frequent | Working Knowledge |

English appeared to be a secondary language to all four men, but both Peter and Walter spoke English fluently and Ernest and Albert both had a working knowledge of English. Even so, there were occasional challenges and/or misunderstandings, but following through in the conversation to clarify these misunderstandings occasionally led to further insights. For example, if the person thought a question meant something slightly different and answered based upon that interpretation more information could be forthcoming that was not anticipated. Again, if there were additional challenges they were often resolved by offering more specific emphases on key words in the question or simply re-wording a sentence. And, if I did not understand a reply I would ask for clarification or further elaboration.

4.2.3 Host Families

Five adult members of host families were interviewed. All hosts were presently connected to one of two organizations (in this case Organization A and Organization B), though the individuals each only hosted for a single volunteer organization at the time of the interview. Three participants, Robert, Mary, and Samantha, hosted volunteers from one international volunteer organization (Organization A). Monica and Myles hosted for another organization (Organization B). Robert and Mary from Organization A had hosted for an additional organization (Organization C) in the past. The organizations they hosted for worked to bring volunteers to assist at a local orphanage, which I will refer to as ‘the orphanage’. All of the host family participants noted some additional affiliation with

the orphanage, whether through their own physical volunteer efforts, their faith groups and/or through personal financial aid/donations.

As mentioned above, two participants, Robert and Mary, noted experiences hosting volunteers from more than one organization. Both stated that they were only actively involved with one organization (in addition to the orphanage itself) at any given time. Both Robert and Mary also noted that they had been involved with Organization A for approximately three years. Myles, Monica, and Samantha had been involved with their respective organizations for a shorter period of time. Both Myles and Monica indicated they had each hosted a single volunteer for a six month span (both within the last year), while Samantha had only been involved with her current organization for one or two months.

For each participant interviewed in this stakeholder group, English was a second or third language. Four of the participants knew English quite well, while the fifth had more frequent difficulties. Again, as a result of the language barrier, there were occasional challenges and/or misunderstandings, similar to the community members. And, if there were such challenges they would often be resolved by offering more specific emphasis on key words in the question, simply re-wording a sentence, or reflective listening.

Table 3 – Host Family Member Characteristics

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Affiliated Organization</i> | <i># of Volunteers Hosted</i> | <i># of Times Hosting</i> | <i>Approx. Duration of Involvement</i> | <i>Previous Involvement with Organizations</i> | <i>Continued Hosting</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Robert | Organization A | 30-50 | 20-35 | 3 years | Yes | Yes |
| Monica | Organization B | 1 | 1 | 1 year | No | Yes |
| Myles | Organization B | 1 | 1 | 1 year | No | Yes |
| Samantha | Organization A | 3 | 1 | 1 month | No | Yes |
| Mary | Organization A | 30-50 | 20-35 | 3 years | Yes | Yes |

4.2.4 Organization Members

Six individuals associated with volunteer tourism organizations were interviewed. Due to the complicated organizational structure of the placements, the interviews varied slightly depending on the role of the individual in that structure. First I will explain the structure, both from the perspective of a volunteer and also as it was explained to me by the individuals that I interviewed. I will then provide descriptions of these individuals in relation to their places within the structure.

From the perspective of the volunteer, the volunteer signs up for and pays for a placement with a volunteer organization (e.g., Organization A), which typically includes the volunteer

experience and lodgings. The volunteer organization then arranges the volunteer placement and also arranges lodgings for the volunteer, typically with a local host family, for the duration of their stay.

As noted, the focus of this study was on volunteer tourism in a village in the Ashanti region. In this village, most international volunteers work in the orphanage. However, the orphanage is not run by the volunteer organizations but by permanent staff. And, in this case the orphanage is an institution officially run by a combination of one church group and the state. This combination is due to a couple of factors. First, the orphanage was established by and is still partially funded by a church group. But, secondly, as the intent of the facility is to care for the well-being of children (some of whom are wards of the state), the facility falls under the auspices of the government’s department of social welfare, which also provides funds.

At the time of the interviews, the orphanage was affiliated with approximately five or six volunteer organizations. This means that at least five or six volunteer organizations have arranged to send volunteers there. Typically there are only volunteers from two or three of those organizations there at one time. Additionally, the orphanage receives donations from a few of these volunteer organizations and, as such, the orphanage is accountable to them.

In terms of the individuals that I interviewed, I spoke to people from various areas in the aforementioned structure. One interview was conducted with a person (Franklin) employed by the organization that I had initially contacted and through which I was registered to volunteer (Organization A). Another participant (Rose) was involved in the on-site management of the orphanage. The remaining four participants from this group were local representatives of the governing bodies affiliated with the orphanage, namely church (Flint) and the state (Shawn, Beau and Barry). Flint was a priest who spoke on behalf of the bishop (and thus the church on a larger scale) when dealing with the orphanage, while Shawn, Beau, and Barry worked for the government in the department of social welfare. All were fluent in English though it was likely not their first language.

Table 4 – Organization Member Characteristics

| <i>Pseudonym</i> | <i>Affiliation</i> | <i>Age Range</i> | <i>Ideas of Other Areas in Need of Assistance from Volunteers</i> |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---|
| Rose | Orphanage staff | 50-70 | Schools and health care |
| Franklin | Organization A | 20-30 | Schools |
| Shawn | Government | 20-30 | Schools and health care |
| Beau | Government | 20-30 | Schools, health care, aging population, and environment |
| Barry | Government | 20-30 | Schools, health care and environment |
| Flint | Church | 50-60 | Schools, health care, and aging population |

4.3 Description of Volunteer Placement

As noted, I participated in volunteer tourism experiences while in Ghana for this project. I spent approximately a month in the village outside of Kumasi volunteering at the orphanage and conducting interviews for this study. This was the main study location and 17 interviews were conducted in connection to this placement. Here I volunteered with the participants referred to as Anna, Stacey, and Leanne as well as a number of other international volunteers. A brief description of this placement can be found in *Section 4.3.1*.

After being in the orphanage outside of Kumasi for a month, I moved north to Tamale. This was where the coordinator for my organization was located and wished me to visit. I was up in that region for just over a week, in that time I taught at a school in a nearby village while conducting three additional interviews. The two volunteers interviewed at this location taught in this area as well, though for different lengths of time. I provide a brief description of a day in this teaching program in *Section 4.3.2*.

4.3.1 A Day at the Orphanage

Mornings would typically start off with breakfast with the host family and, after finishing getting ready, we would head off to the orphanage to arrive there between 8:30am and 9:00am. Upon arrival at the orphanage we would walk in and immediately be greeted and/or grabbed by those children who were already out of their cribs to play. Otherwise, we would retrieve children from their cribs, changing their diapers and clothes before setting them free to roam and greet the rest of the volunteers. Once all of the mobile children (i.e. those that could walk or crawl) were out of their cribs, the beds would be stripped of the covers and the plastic mattresses wiped down by staff and/or volunteers before being re-made in preparation for later.

Overall there were approximately 40 children at the orphanage. Usually the volunteers would help with children aged from newborn to approximately the age of two, though we helped to clean the beds for all of the children. When I was helping at the orphanage there were 17 children in that approximate age range that we primarily helped to take care of, though we would occasionally help with the older children.

Once these duties were complete it was up to each volunteer to decide with which child/children they wanted to play until it was time for the children to eat lunch. Sometimes the older children would amuse themselves, leaving the volunteers to play with the small babies. Other times the older children would prove too rambunctious and the smallest children would be left in their cribs for their own safety, particularly if there were a low number of volunteers (i.e. one or two). Most days it seemed there were between four and eight volunteers at the orphanage, though I experienced

one day when I was the only volunteer and another where there were only two of us. Both of these days were quite challenging.

After playing for a while it was lunch time for the children. The oldest would be fed first, followed by those who were younger, until all were fed. For the most part the lunches for the older children appeared to be something similar to oatmeal, or occasionally soup, and they were given water to drink. They also occasionally had bananas or oranges, and sometimes had a drink similar to hot chocolate, which I was told was vitamin enriched.

The volunteers often fed many of the small babies who needed bottles and to be burped, etc. Once all of the children in our charge had eaten they would again be changed and put back into their cribs for naps (starting with the youngest and progressing to the older children). At that point the volunteers would leave for a few hours to get lunch and attend to whatever other things they needed to do, often retiring for a nap.

Between 2:30pm and 3:00pm the volunteers would return and again go through the process of changing the children and playing with them. The staff would also bathe many of the children with the assistance of the volunteers. Again the volunteers would help to make certain everyone was fed, specifically helping with the small babies who, again, needed to be fed and burped, etc. and then all of our charges would be changed again and put in bed for the night. Once the children were in their beds and mosquito netting put into place around the beds we, the volunteers, would head off to our respective host families. This typically would be done by 5:30pm or 6:00pm, although when there were fewer than four volunteers, this sometimes took until 6:30pm or 7:00pm.

4.3.2 A Day Teaching in Tamale

In Tamale, the beginning of my day typically started by eating breakfast at my host's house and getting ready to go to the school. Once prepared for the day ahead we would head out to the village where we were to teach. For this we were driven by one of the people associated with the organization in the organization's van to the schools where we were to teach (as there was no other way to get there). Classes were to start between 9:00am and 10:00am each day, though it appeared to depend more upon what time the teachers and pupils arrived.

Danielle and I taught in one school while Theresa taught in another school not far from us. Upon arrival Danielle and I would wait for one or more of the local teachers to arrive to determine which class of three we would be teaching for that day. Most days I taught in a classroom on my own, though which one varied from one day to the next. The three classes appeared to be arranged based upon age and ability. One had older and more advanced children, probably the equivalent of grades five and six in Canada, in terms of age. The second included children who were probably the

equivalent of grades three or four in Canada. And the last classroom was comprised of any children too young for the other classes.

The first day that I taught I was placed in a classroom on my own with about 40 children ranging in age from what Canadians would call pre-school to approximately grade two. I had no knowledge of what they had been taught before or what they were supposed to be learning but was just told to 'go teach them'. I started with drawing some basic shapes on the board to perhaps work on their English vocabulary but the older students seemed to quickly grow bored. I then tried the song 'Tony Chestnut', an action song I learned when I was young. They apparently knew that one quite well and sang it along with me. By that time I had gathered from some of the older children that they had started to learn some basic math so I worked on some basic addition for the rest of the morning until the classes let out around 11am.

The rest of my week there I was in the second classroom with the group of children who were in the middle grades, or 'forms' as they are called. I believe there were approximately around 15 students in that class, but am not certain as students occasionally just did not come depending on outside factors. For example, I was told that an elder died in the village where we were teaching and, because of that, the next day I only had six students in my class. I had to continue to come up with my own lesson plans, which was typically English language with some math. There did not appear to be much continuity between what the teachers and volunteers taught. We each taught what we wanted or felt we needed to as we were not told about what the children were supposed to learn, nor what they had already studied. We would teach for approximately two hours and then school would be done for the day. We would then return to Tamale. Once back in Tamale we would have lunch and explore the markets. There was talk of visiting an orphanage there to help teach in the afternoons but that did not come to fruition while I was there.

4.4 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to set the stage for the presentation of the data collected for this study. In particular, I felt it important to introduce the locations for the research; an outline of the participants and their various stakeholder groups; and to share what constituted a typical day in a volunteer placement in both locations.

In Chapter 5 I present the analysis and results garnered through the interviews and observations I conducted while in Ghana. This will show some of the ideas and issues brought to my attention by the participants that I have introduced in this chapter.

5.0 Presentation of Analysis and Results

This study is focused on exploring participants' expectations and experiences of volunteer tourism from their different viewpoints. As such, this combination forms the lens through which the results and analysis are presented. Additional attention is given to themes with ties to expectations and/or motivations, two closely linked concepts, and these are also identified and discussed in this chapter.

As identified in the literature review, expectations can be expressed in a variety of ways, but these expressions are often the most obvious when positive expectations are not met or are far exceeded. This is referred to by Shrivasta (1983) as disconfirmation, or when a confirmation of negative expectations occurs. Also, as noted in the literature review, Petty and Cacioppo (1981) refer to the 'Adaptation level approach' to describe the formation of a range of acceptable outcomes with regards to expectations, based upon past experience. When the outcomes fall outside of this range, according to these authors, the individual is more likely to report dissatisfaction (Petty & Cacioppo). This is because the participant is more likely to notice and/or consciously evaluate what they expected as opposed to what they experienced, particularly if there is a large gap between their expectations and their experience (whereby the experience falls outside of their range of acceptable outcomes). For example, if someone is surprised it is an indication that the person was caught unaware because they had not expected and/or anticipated what they had encountered, but this may not be taken negatively if it falls within an acceptable range of options. Such variance from the expected may be seen as positive or negative to the participant, but is more often expressed in terms of unmet positive expectations or met or exceeded negative expectations, which, in turn, relate to satisfaction levels (Oliver, 1997). This becomes particularly important when looking at the input from the participants in this study as some expressed dissatisfaction relating to surprises that they encountered, while others expressed some positive sentiments regarding some surprises that they experienced. In such a service oriented setting, customer satisfaction is a major issue as positive accounts/reviews can be helpful for positive word of mouth while negative accounts theoretically could be detrimental to the organizations and people involved (Anderson, 1998). These concepts are discussed further in the results and discussion.

Information regarding the experiences and expectations of the various stakeholder groups are presented in terms of overarching themes based upon my analysis of the data, and are discussed in the following sections. As noted in the methods section, twenty individuals representing four stakeholder groups were interviewed for the purposes of this study.

Overarching Themes

There were three overarching themes emanating from the analysis of the data. These themes relate to expectations as they are created through the stages of the experience, cultural differences, and communication. Each of these themes has a number of subthemes, which are further described in their respective sections. Additionally addressed in this chapter are suggestions from the various participants to improve volunteer tourism in the area.

The presentation of data within these themes varies, as described below, depending upon the consistency of the concerns and/or ideas presented by members of different stakeholder groups. This is because while all of the groups may have provided comments which support a particular theme, the concerns of each group may be different within the overarching theme or subtheme. For example, later I describe how communication was an important part of the volunteer tourism experience for all groups. But, the type of communication being discussed changed for members of the different groups. The volunteers wanted a greater quantity of information that was more accurate regarding the placements and people that they would meet and also discussed issues stemming from communication problems. The Ghanaian groups (community members, organization members and host families) while similar in wanting more information in general and reporting issues relating to the topic of communication, expressed communications issues somewhat differently. The community and organization members generally noted that they wanted more contact with the volunteers, while host family members did not note such a concern. Additionally, all three Ghanaian groups expressed a wish for continuing contact with the volunteers beyond the volunteer's time in the community (which was a topic not mentioned by the volunteers) as most had expressed disappointment with a noted lack of this in some previous experiences. This is an example of the way I handled the issues as they were viewed by the different groups; communication is discussed directly in *Section 5.3*.

To clarify the presentation of the analysis, I used the following format throughout this chapter. Major themes or sections are introduced with a brief summary of the information/data to be presented in the section as well as relevant literature in order to frame discussion. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the data, which is broken down into relevant sub-themes.

5.1 Expectations through Different Stages of the Experience

This section introduces several sub-themes in the form of a rough timeline of the experience from the perspective of the participants. Three main stages and several sub-themes relating to stages of the experience are discussed in this section. Within this section the main themes are: planning and/or initial development of the volunteer tourism experience, the experience with the volunteer in the community and then after the volunteer experience, and looking forward. These themes are further

broken down into additional sub-themes, but, more importantly, will be discussed in two main groups. One group is comprised of the members of the host family, members of the organization, and the community members, because these groups often responded quite similarly to each other. The other group is the volunteers. This major split is shown in the description of the stages of the volunteer experience in *Section 5.1.1* and stages from the perspective of local stakeholders in *Section 5.1.2*. This division was made because the stages of the volunteer experience are different from those experienced by the other three stakeholder groups.

Experiences are frequently described in a consistent sequential order moving progressively from the start of an activity to the end, in the form of a timeline, as is often used in telling a story. As Sheridan, Chamberlain and Dupuis (2011) explain, “Time and narrative are inextricably woven together, in that narrative almost always involves time and requires a temporal component to be meaningful. Time is organized through narrative and narrative humanizes time” (p. 554). Clawson and Knetch (1966) developed a five-stage model highlighting such a progression through time in terms of an outdoor recreation experience. The first stage related to planning, the second to travel to the location, the third regarding the time spent at the destination, fourth consisting of travel from the site, and the fifth referred to recollection or reminiscing after the entire activity was complete. The sequence of different stages through an experience can also serve to show some of the expectation building, expectation fulfillment or denial, and satisfaction levels within the various phases or stages. This order has helped to shape the stages discussed in this chapter. The stages shown in this section of results are similar to that of Clawson and Knetch, though travel to and from the site were not identified to be as important to participants in this study and, as such, are not included. This is likely the case because only one stakeholder group, the volunteers, actually experienced travel to and from the location. Also, the volunteers interviewed did not appear to see transit to/from Ghana as being very important overall in their volunteer tourism experience.

While there are three main stages, this section is divided into two main parts as noted earlier. The first section moves through the stages of the experience from the perspective of the volunteer group, while the second section relates to the stages experienced by the community members, organization members, and host families. The second group encompasses the three local/host stakeholder groups as their accounts through the process are relatively similar. This group of three is referred to in this and the following sections as the ‘Ghanaian group’ as all participants from these groups all native to Ghana.

The three main stages in the case of the volunteer proceed from when the volunteer decided to participate and started conducting research about the trip, to the actual experience, and then to what

they felt would happen after the experience. These stages are referred to further in this section as *Planning, In the Community, and After the Experience*. These are described in *Section 5.1.1*.

The three main stages for the second group are relatively similar to the volunteers, but with a number of different sub-themes. The main themes relate to the initial development of the host organizations, volunteers coming to the community, and the volunteer leaving. In this case, the stages are called *Initial Development, Volunteer Present in Community, and After the Volunteer*. The themes and sub-themes I have identified with relation to expectations within these stages are seen in a diagrammatic form below.

Diagram 1 - Expectations through the Stages of Experience

5.1.1 Volunteers

5.1.2 Ghanaian Groups

5.1.1.1 Planning

5.1.2.1 Initial Development

- **Pre-planning**
 - *Motivations to Volunteer*
 - *Finding an Experience*
 - *Choosing Ghana*
 - *Role of Past Travel Experience*
- **Building Expectations**
- **Advance Knowledge, Preparation, and Planning**

- **Initial Development of Organization(s)**
- **Building Expectations - Advance Knowledge or Preparation and Planning**

5.1.1.2 Volunteer Present In the Community

5.1.2.2 Volunteer Present in Community

- **Orientation**
- **The role of volunteers**

- **Perceptions and/or Expectations about the Volunteers**
- **Orienting the Volunteers: the Ghanaian perspective**
- **Concern for volunteers**
- **Local Involvement in the Organizations**

5.1.1.3 After the Volunteer Experience

5.1.2.3 After the Volunteer

- **Accomplishing Goals**
- **Bringing home the message**
- **Changing Outlooks: Impacts on the volunteer**
- **Future plans**

- **Impact on the organization**
- **Changes in the community**

These are the main sub-themes presented through this chapter. The two columns show how the stages of the two groups, volunteers and the Ghanaian group, can be seen to align in some areas.

5.1.1 Volunteers

5.1.1.1 Planning

As noted by Clawson and Ketch (1966), planning is an important part of any travel or recreational activity. Through the process of planning one comes to develop expectations regarding what the experience will be like. In this section, I present information regarding the planning undertaken by volunteers prior to engaging in a volunteer tourism experience. I discuss the topics of pre-planning, building expectations, advance knowledge and issues of planning more generally.

Pre-planning

For volunteers, planning was noticeably different from the other groups in the volunteer tourism experience. Pre-planning in this case refers to how decisions were made regarding participation in a volunteer tourism experience. For the volunteers, decision-making had a variety of meanings, as most appeared to be looking for a place to volunteer in Africa with some sense of security, friendly people, and an interesting culture. There were a number of sub-themes that arose in the interviews with volunteers with reference to pre-planning, including: *Motivations to Volunteer*; *Finding an Experience*; *Choosing Ghana*; and, finally, *Role of Past Experience*. These themes are further elaborated upon below.

Motivations to Volunteer

There were a number of motivating factors mentioned by each volunteer in terms of wanting to participate in a volunteer tourism experience, and more specifically, the trip they were engaged in at the time of the interview. All of the participants had travelled internationally in the past and said that they enjoyed traveling. Stacey, Leanne, Theresa, and Danielle all mentioned wanting to go to Africa. Most also mentioned enjoyment related to experiencing different cultures and noted a wish to help others/do something useful while enjoying these things. Leanne put it simply saying, “*It’s good to [...] travel and see another country and do some good things*”. This meant that volunteering was seen by most as a good thing to do while experiencing a different culture. For example, Danielle said:

Well, it’s like; it’s a selfish reason, because I really like to travel. But also because I think you can do something good for other people and other countries by traveling. So it’s [...] a win-win situation.

Anna and Stacey mentioned having a more ‘authentic’ cultural experience through volunteering. This would suggest an expectation that they would be more engaged in the cultural experience than if they were simply a tourist in the general sense. These volunteers appeared to attribute this to the fact that they were more engaged with the people through the host family and

thereby had more opportunities to experience the culture. For example, Stacey said this about why she chose this trip:

I think it's... or thought and I still think it's a good way to get to know a culture, more than by just travelling around the country and it's... you really... you kind of get into it also when you live in the host family then it's just deeper. [...] That, that was probably the main idea of it and [...] also 'cause I really think it's a good thing, of course, to help somewhere [...] where help is needed.

Leanne and Theresa also described a desire to test and/or build their skills in teaching and/or working with children before investing in the training required in their own countries to work in those fields. Theresa also noted financial considerations as a factor in deciding to volunteer, rather than just traveling as a typical tourist, as she was on a tight budget and volunteer trips are typically seen as less expensive than other types of trips, saying:

[W]ell I thought that it would be a more inexpensive way to travel and I always liked volunteering when I was younger. I did a lot of volunteering so it's just nice to help someone. [...] And I was curious about teaching and seeing if I would like to be teaching so [...] I decided to put the two together and come and volunteer and try teaching because that way with volunteering you don't have to have any prerequisites on if you're qualified to. Volunteers are just accepted so that was a simple way to be able to try it out.

This shows that while a volunteer may have the motivation to participate in a certain type of program, they must still consider their financial status based upon the needs they anticipate occurring during and after their trip. This shows the expectation that they can engage in such an activity and not be negatively impacted (financially) once they return home.

Once participants decided to participate in a volunteer tourism experience, the time comes for them to start planning their trip. This is captured in the sub-theme *Finding an Experience*, addressed in the next section.

Finding an Experience

In finding an experience, the potential volunteer must weigh anticipated/expected benefits and/or drawbacks to find a program which best suits their needs or motivations. In order to do this, the volunteer must first form some opinions or expectations regarding the outcomes of selecting a specific organization and/or program. As noted earlier, expectations are built based upon the information found and/or provided relating to a subject and vary dependent upon the resources available (Hamer, 2006; Licata, Chakraborty, & Krishnan, 2008; Wearing, 2001). As such, the source of information accessed by the potential volunteer can be important in the building of expectations and also in the decision-making process. Lyons and Wearing (2008) noted popular means of information gathering about travel, destinations and programs can include: pamphlets,

articles, guides, books, television programs, and, particularly in the case of volunteer tourism, word-of-mouth from other participants.

When the participants were asked how they determined with which organization to volunteer, all five participants noted they found out about the organization through popular media. Anna, Stacey, Leanne and Theresa all described having done online searches to find their organization, as well as to looking more deeply at the specific program and/or location. Danielle found out about her organization through a television program but she too went online to find the specific program in which she wanted to participate. This appears contrary to the findings of Lyons and Wearing (2008) who noted that word-of-mouth was one of the most common ways in which volunteer tourism was promoted. However, this could be due to a lack of contact with others who had participated in volunteer tourism prior to engaging in their search for their first trip, as only Leanne noted knowing someone who has such an experience prior to her own trip. Additionally, internet is proving increasingly important as a source of information for tourism, particularly as more people become familiar with the medium, though many are still hesitant to book online themselves (Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1998; Castaneda, Frias & Rodriguez, 2009; Lang, 2000). In fact, many authors have noted that the internet and/or information and communication technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized the tourism industry (Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1998; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Castaneda, Frias & Rodriguez, 2009; Lang, 2000; Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; Poon, 1993; Sheldon, 1997). As such, this could also suggest a trend that the use of online resources may also be increasing for this form of tourism (among others) and potentially outpacing other sources. Additionally, the participants interviewed all signed up for their programs online.

When the participants were deciding which program and organization to choose, they considered various factors. Some of the determining factors mentioned included: trust; safety; the history, reputation and/or affiliations of the organization; an attractive website; financial considerations; and orientation programs. These factors were often discussed in combination. The different factors are discussed further below. Some of these can be directly connected to Maslow's (1973) hierarchy of needs, as was described in the literature review, relating to one's need for shelter, food, and safety before being able to proceed up the pyramid (see also Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006). There are implied expectations for these elements/needs to be fulfilled by the volunteer organization in order to ensure the participant's safety, satisfaction and help address other concerns.

Most of the factors were noted by two or more individuals, though only Stacey suggested that orientation programming had an impact on her decision. The most commonly mentioned factor was the history, reputation and/or affiliations of the organizations. Anna, Stacey, Leanne, and Theresa all described looking into the organizations, to varying degrees, in order to determine if they were

legitimate and/or what the reviews of past travelers said about the organization. Anna made this recommendation for others when planning such a trip:

First of all, as much as possible, make sure that the organization is legitimate if you've got anybody who can do any checking around for you. Like I had a friend who worked for CIDA and she made a couple of phone calls on my behalf and I was looking at another organization, that I didn't go with. That is the biggest thing [...] just to make sure that you are dealing with people who are honest.

Danielle, who had volunteered abroad in the past, was in Ghana with the same organization that she had worked with elsewhere and with which she was comfortable. Stacey got involved with an organization, in part, because of its ties to an organization in her home country. These all indicate concern for one's well-being, as the individual is being required to trust the organization that they choose to meet their basic needs for a relatively long span of time in an unfamiliar environment. Also, before travel, participants communicate with individuals in the organization when booking and/or planning for their trip and, as a result, there can be a sense of trust established. As Anna said,

I went with that organization because the person I was corresponding with was able to give me information about who I'd be working with here, the other organizations that they are affiliated with so I, I kinda trusted them.

Also, in today's technological age, the appearance of a website can be another factor in making a decision and creating expectations. Stacey, Leanne, and Theresa all noted that they liked the look of the website of the organization that they chose when they were looking for an organization and program that would best suit them. Stacey said:

[I]t was kind of a hard decision which organization I wanted to take, because I really wanted one [...] to be on the safe side. And, well, it looked nice, I have to admit, the website, and also the price, yeah... it did play an issue. [...] And oh! Of course the [...] kind of orientation week I thought was really good, so we had it in Ghana, in Accra.

Finally, for some participants, the decision can come down to finances in terms of program selection, particularly when comparing similar organizations and/or programs. While the main reasons for engaging in volunteer tourism generally appeared to revolve around doing something that would benefit others while travelling, as noted above, the specific organization and/or program selected was based on a number of factors that often worked in tandem, as alluded to by Stacey's comment above. In this combination some volunteers mentioned a financial element. As seen in Stacey's statement, financial considerations did come into play for her, though her focus was more on other factors. Theresa also noted a financial aspect of planning saying this about the organization she ended up choosing:

It was just one of the two that I found that seemed to be really reputable and [...] were less expensive than a lot of the more major companies. So it was kind of price that caught my eye.

This implies that finances may play a role in the decision-making process, particularly in deciding between similar organizations or programs. This indicates that, while the focus may be on other factors, financial matters do play a role in the decision-making process, though the degree may vary.

In addition to general concerns related to safety and the cultural unknowns both Stacey and Danielle noted comfort/a sense of security at going through an organization. Danielle referred to this saying:

[M]y concerns were that Africa is maybe one of the most difficult continents to travel, or at least that's what you hear. So yeah, I was not as comfortable as when I went to Cambodia, but [...] if you're traveling with an organization everything is arranged, at least for the weeks that you are volunteering. So that's [...] a relief or [...] [offers] peace of mind.

Another factor in the decision-making process was trying to determine which country to choose after deciding to take part in a volunteer tourism experience. The next section describes the reasons why the volunteers opted to volunteer in Ghana.

Choosing Ghana

Choosing a destination is a major part of planning a travel experience. A destination is often selected based upon its reputation as well as what the individual wants or expects to get and/or achieve in their travel. Such expectations or goals could be as simple as being safe or could be very specific regarding experiencing a certain element of the local culture. The volunteers in this study had a variety of considerations that went into the selection of Ghana. These are discussed next.

As alluded to in the previous section, Stacey, Leanne, Theresa and Danielle all said that they wanted to travel to Africa and implied that Ghana was a logical choice, while Anna said that she wanted to come specifically to Ghana. In addition to the general idea of wanting to go to Africa, participants described their own reasons for choosing Ghana. Theresa and Danielle noted limited options for countries to volunteer in within Africa, but, in general, each volunteer had her own reason for her choice. Anna mentioned a specific interest in music, saying:

Initially I wanted to come to Ghana because I am interested in the music, and volunteering seemed like a good way to experience the culture in a way that's a bit more authentic, rather than just traveling, and also do something useful.

Leanne and Stacey both indicated the safety of Ghana, with Stacey additionally noting the perceived friendliness of Ghanaians as a factor, saying:

Well, I really wanted to go to Africa and [...] Ghana, I think, was a very safe country to go to. [...] I heard it was a very friendly nation, so that was one of the reasons as well. I really wanted to be welcomed.

Theresa did not find the other African locations offered by the organization as attractive and also had connections to a nearby country. And Danielle noted 'a call' to go to Ghana, saying:

I just went on [the] internet and there was Ghana. And that's just the way it went. [...] So no particular reason, it was just a feeling. You have to go there. [...] And also because there were a lot of volunteering projects so... and I have never been to Africa so that was one of the reasons. I wanted to go to Africa.

There were also motivations in terms of timing of the trip mentioned by Leanne, Theresa, and Danielle. All three women were trying to determine future life plans prior to or during the planning of their trips. Both Leanne and Theresa were thinking about going back to school, university or college, but were unable to at that point for different reasons. This could be related to both of these women having identified themselves as wishing to test their skills or to build their skills by working in teaching or with children, as noted previously. Danielle was also trying to decide between going back to school, a new job path, or simply travel. Also, Theresa mentioned that January and February were the best times to take off from her workplace and the weather, saying:

I came in January a) because it's winter in the U.S. and it's warm here and really cold there and I don't like cold, so to escape the cold I came. Also, because I work in retail and, um, January and February are the slowest months in retail, so they didn't really need me at my job. And they're holding it for when I get back but... this is the least time that they'd need me so the best time to go away.

In addition to learning through planning and conducting research about the country they were to visit, past experiences may have helped some of the volunteers in terms of developing more realistic expectations, as past experience and available information are ways in which one develops expectations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, Wearing, 2001). This is discussed in more depth next.

Role of past travel experience

All of the five volunteers had previous international travel experience, but only Anna and Danielle had been volunteer tourists before. General travel did not appear to make much of a difference in their volunteer tourism experience, aside from increasing their desire to experience cultures that they had not encountered before and, as a result, travel more. As Danielle said:

Well, it was just, for me, ever since the first day that [I] started traveling, traveling has been becoming a sort of way of living and a passion for me. So I was thinking last year [...], what will I be doing? Do I want to go back to school? Do I want to go travel and then I was like, no, you have to go travel. That's when I made up my mind about going on this trip.

But, prior volunteer tourism experiences did seem more to play a role in shaping the current experiences of two volunteers. Danielle had an additional comment about her prior travel experience, and she appeared to discount her short travel experiences (non-volunteer travel), saying:

I've been travelling, well, that was just in Europe with my parents but I don't think that is of any importance here. But I've lived on one of the Caribbean islands for six months. That was during my study for facility management. I have been travelling to Peru. I've been volunteering there. I took a Spanish course. I've been to Guatemala, also for Spanish course and volunteering. In total that was five months. I've been to

Cambodia for three months volunteering and traveling and now I am here in Ghana for two months volunteering and traveling.

Anna had been on one volunteer trip before, while Danielle had taken part in four others. When asked what they thought about those experiences they both implied that their past volunteer tourism trips helped prepare them for their current experience. For instance, Anna said this about her past experience volunteering abroad:

It was a positive experience in terms of the host family, and the travel, and the organization. The only negative was that I kind of put it together at the last minute and [at] my volunteer placement, I didn't end up doing anything very useful. I was supposed to be teaching music and it didn't work out very well. [...] [But] that was kind of a trial and error thing. I don't hold that against anybody, but I made sure I was doing something a little bit more concrete when I came back this time because of that experience.

In Anna's case, her past experience seemed to help her select a more organized program and indicated it helped her to understand what she might experience, saying at one point: “[B]ecause this was [...] my second time being here I think I had pretty clear expectations about what I would accomplish.” This indicated that her expectations might have been different if it had only been her first trip there. For Danielle, knowledge from past experience appeared to manifest itself more in a general sense of preparedness. Danielle referred to her previous volunteer trips throughout the interview as something of a benchmark for her experience in Ghana.

This seems to indicate that even after an experience, such as the prior trips by Danielle and Anna, the recollection of such events can last and also affect future choices and preparations. In this case, future choices and preparations can be seen to relate to the planning stage currently being discussed. Also, the recollection noted here is related to the final stage of an experience. The final stage will be discussed later in this paper, but it could be important to note here, as this shows something of the cyclical nature of these stages and also ties in the element of time as one may go through a variety of such experiences throughout their lifespan and build different expectations based upon life experiences as well as other information.

Building Expectations

Before any volunteer comes to a volunteer tourism destination there are a variety of expectations that are typically developed. And it is not only volunteers who develop expectations, but also the other people who are affected by volunteers traveling to their community. Expectations can be built based upon structured and intentional research from various primary or secondary sources, as expectations are developed based upon the information available to the person (Hamer, 2006; Licata, Chakraborty, & Krishnan, 2008; Wearing, 2001). As noted earlier, such research could be based upon information found in books, pamphlets, online, or through descriptions from other people (word-of-mouth), as

well as many other media (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). It could also be gathered without intending or even realizing that one is developing expectations through a variety of sources, including those noted above and more. What I found is that each stakeholder group developed slightly different expectations. There also appeared to be strong influences from one stakeholder group, namely the organization, on others when it comes to building initial expectations. It appeared that in most cases there was information supplied by the organization to the other stakeholder groups regarding what to expect in terms of experiences and other stakeholders. For example, the volunteers appeared to rely on the descriptions of the program online to build expectations regarding what their volunteer work would be like; and host families were given some basic information on what the volunteers might be like by the organization before the volunteer came. This idea is discussed further in this chapter.

In terms of volunteers, typically one of the biggest sources of information regarding what the experience would be like is the organization itself. This is because each organization works differently and thus the specific organization would theoretically be in the best position to provide accurate information in terms of what volunteers might expect. Thus, after identifying how they found the organization, I asked volunteers what that source made them think that their experience would be like. For the most part Leanne, Stacey, and Anna, the three volunteers from the orphanage of focus, said that they did not hold many expectations based upon the website or other materials, though Stacey mentioned that she thought the organization's coordinator or someone related to her organization would occasionally check in to see how things were going, saying:

I expected them to, yeah, ask me from now and then how I was doing. And to help me out if I had any problems or if I wanted to go back or change the project or something, that's the main thing I think.

With this she later mentioned that she expected more contact with her local organization coordinator than she actually encountered to that point in her trip. She also indicated that she expected more in terms of the coordinator showing genuine interest in how Stacey was doing. She used an example, describing how the coordinator only asked about the adequacy of her housing while in the presence of her host family (rather than speaking with her privately). This was an issue for her, as she seemed to feel pressured to say that it was good/fine because of the presence of her hosts though it was not actually an optimal situation.

I also asked the participants about the expectations that they held prior to their trips and most claimed to either not have many/any expectations or did not know what their expectations had been. However, at different points in their interviews most alluded to expectations that either had or had not been met through their experience. For example, Anna mentioned that she had expected the placement to be similar to what she found but that her host family situation was different from the information that she had been provided. Leanne said she did not have specific expectations, but

stated that she was “*prepared for everything*” and that she “*was just sure it would be good.*” Stacey, in addition to her expectations about contact with the coordinator of the program, admitted to not knowing what to expect and being a bit concerned because she did not know how she “*was going to get along with the people and with the whole culture.*” This is important to note, as it underscores the differences in cultures as a factor in the expectations developed early on in a trip such as this. This concept of cultural differences is an important factor and is discussed further in *Section 5.2*.

Additionally, both Danielle and Theresa, the volunteer teachers I spoke with, mentioned that they thought the programs they took part in were going to be different based upon the descriptions of the programs. More specifically, Danielle mentioned having signed up to do something that the organization called ‘care’ in an orphanage but ended up teaching, saying:

[T]here were some [...] choices. First, of course, the continent, the country, but then the place you wanted to volunteer. So, you have teaching, you could educate in HIV and AIDs, or you can work in an orphanage, and that was ‘care’. I ended up teach[ing] but I chose ‘care’, so, that was kind of interesting. And [...] every volunteer [I] met in the orphanage had applied for care. [...] [S]o the information turned out to be not what you would be doing.

Theresa had signed up for a teaching program and, based upon the website, thought she would be assisting a teacher in a classroom. Instead, she found herself teaching a class on her own as there was no teacher. These two experiences show that inaccurate descriptions do occur, which could affect how realistic the expectations built are based upon such information. However, while it did occur with both Theresa and Danielle it was not identified as an issue at the orphanage of focus.

Nonetheless, this could be important to look at in further studies.

Additionally, Theresa mentioned the number of volunteers, saying:

I kind of expected there to be a few more volunteers than just me, but then I did meet you. [...] They explained to me that this is just a slow season for volunteering, which makes sense because most people that volunteer, I think, are, a lot of the time, students. And summertime is when they don’t have school, so more people come in summer.

This could be an important consideration for volunteers in their deliberations regarding organizations and/or programs. Not only as they may have more or less to do at different times of the year depending on the number of volunteers, but also as many people feel more comfortable, or even more safe, if they have other people similar to themselves with whom to identify.

Advance knowledge, preparation and planning

Participants were also asked how they prepared for their trip. All noted some form of preparation through research, though the amount of research varied, ranging from mainly reading a travel guide (Danielle) to reading a large number of books on the country (Stacey). Danielle, Theresa and Stacey also mentioned immunizations prior to traveling. This would have likely included protection from

Yellow Fever, as Yellow Fever immunization certificates were required for the Ghanaian tourist visa, and likely protection from Diphtheria, Tetanus, and various forms of Hepatitis among others, as may have been recommended by travel immunization clinics. I also went through such required and recommended vaccinations myself shortly before travel, as well as getting anti-malarial medications. Stacey and Theresa also expressed the need to save money for the trip beforehand along with their other preparations, with which I strongly identified. Stacey shared this thought saying, “*I saved a lot of money. And [...] I tried to get a lot of information about Ghana, about the people here, and, I read a lot of things about it*”. Later, Theresa, who had no contact with Stacey, echoed these sentiments, her thoughts were:

Save as much money as possible and lots and lots and lots of immunization shots. [...] That was basically the preparation. [...] Reading about the country a little bit. Trying to learn about the culture before I came, so I would know a little bit more about what to expect. And I think that was good.

As alluded to in earlier comments, in the end, participants planned for as much as they could but anticipated some surprises. Anna reinforced this sentiment saying this about her preparation:

As much as you can prepare for something like this. I think that it is always going to be a surprise, and that's part of why you do it. And nothing, any surprises I had, were certainly things I could deal with.

In this statement Anna notes the option for things that are unexpected, but also that such surprises may be considered as part of the reason for taking part in the experience. This suggests that sometimes the unexpected is, in fact, expected in such experiences. Finally, Danielle summarized much of the basic preparation quite simply, putting it this way,

I just go there and I will see what happens and just take it as it comes. But yeah, of course you, you need your vaccinations, you need to buy some stuff [to] use, like first aid.

The last few statements express some of the openness that many volunteer tourists appear to have about the uncertainty of their experiences. In such travels it may be anticipated and/or expected for things to come up that one has not prepared for, but such encounters are not always seen negatively. Some of the volunteers interviewed expressed some trepidation for the unknown, but most welcomed it as part of the experience.

There appears to only be so much preparation that a volunteer can undertake for such a trip, some reading, vaccinations and the like, and beyond that, as Danielle said “*see what happens and just take it as it comes*”. On that note, the next section discusses the time in which the volunteer engages in the volunteer experience on site.

5.1.1.2 Volunteer Present in the Community

Orientation

Upon the arrival at the destination some organizations offered orientation programs to introduce the volunteer to the local culture. In my study the volunteers were asked if they had taken part in such an orientation program. If the volunteer had experienced an orientation program, I then asked them to describe that programming and if they felt it prepared them for the rest of their experience. Stacey, Leanne, and Danielle said that they had an orientation program while Anna and Theresa only noted something of a brief introduction from their respective co-ordinators. This often was in addition to having reading to do in advance of travel. Orientation assisted in various ways, often acting as a supplement to what the volunteers had read beforehand. As Leanne said, *“It was very interesting and a lot of new information, which I [didn’t] read before or something like that. Lots of good preparation from the time we were there.”* Stacey, Leanne, Danielle and Theresa indicated that an orientation is an important part of the experience in terms of being able to adjust to the different setting of Ghana. Stacey recounted some of the things that she had learned about in her orientation program, including advice for managing when various situations arose, saying,

[It] told us a lot of things about health issues and the culture and food. [...] We had... well they went to the market with us and we had drumming and dancing lessons and even that, cooking thing. And [...] maybe how to act, or how to get involved in the family, or yeah, they just had a lot of tips so... and a lot of background because they’ve been there for a while maybe.

Danielle expressed some surprise at having an orientation because her past experiences with volunteer tourism had not included such a program. While she was surprised she also did say that in the case of Ghana it helped immensely, likely due to the cultural differences. As she said,

The funny thing was that it was not in Cambodia like that, it was in Ghana. It, we had an orientation day. I think it has to do with the difference in countries because Cambodia is easier to travel and it’s less of a... hurricane that comes over you. So I think that’s the reason why in Ghana there is an orientation day and it’s good that it’s there.

When asked more about the orientation program that she had taken part in, Danielle replied:

[F]irst we got some ethics. Like a little presentation about what is Ghana. What religions do you have in Ghana? Why do people eat with their right hand and not with their left? And stuff like that. We got a meal. Of course, a local dish, so it was banku with, I don’t know what kind of stew. They showed us around in a tro-tro [bus]. [...] They will show you banks, internet places.

Such programming appeared to help the volunteers in managing day-to-day activities.

Both Stacey and Danielle had come to Ghana through different organizations, so while some of the basic elements of the orientation may have been similar, there were differences depending upon the organization. All of the volunteers felt that it was quite helpful to have such an introduction to the

culture, and Theresa expressed a wish that she had more an introduction at the start of her trip. In response to a question about what she would have liked to have changed about her time in Ghana, Theresa said:

I think maybe a little bit more orientation... To try and help with the whole culture shock aspect. And maybe just a little bit more communication or clarification beforehand so it's, well, not so surprising all of a sudden, might be good. [...]Yeah. And I've, I've talked to people that have, like a week-long orientation and they say that's too much and it was just really boring. But I think having really no orientation is kind of the opposite end of the spectrum. So I think anywhere [around] about a three day orientation, two or three days might be very beneficial.

This shows more of the variation between the programming of different organizations. It also suggests that, while an orientation program can be extremely helpful, it may not be necessary to prolong such an experience as the volunteer may wish to experience some things first-hand rather than be lectured to for an extended period of time.

Anna, Stacey, and Danielle spoke specifically about the orientation program or the brief introductions that they had in terms of preparing them to join Ghanaian society. In discussion they all said that they were glad for what they had in terms of orientation. Stacey noted that perhaps what was taught may not have been the most important elements but she found it helpful to be in contact with other volunteers. Having other people around who were going through similar emotions or experiences with more similar backgrounds while dealing with a completely unfamiliar culture and place was comforting. As Stacey put it,

I think it might not be so much what they were saying but it was just that... 'cause we were twenty in our first week, it was just we, arriving there together and, like, we were all in the same situation and could talk about it and, I think it was an easy way to start the whole thing.[...]Yeah. It was probably more important than what exactly was told.

This likely had a lot to do with being in such a different culture. Cultural differences will be discussed further in *Section 5.2* but it should be mentioned here as well. Cultural differences permeate much of the volunteer experience and may, in fact, be part of the motivation for the volunteers choice to participate, and this will be discussed further later in the chapter.

After the completion of any orientation programming it was time for the volunteer to move on to their volunteer placement. The next section looks at the roles of the volunteers as they saw them, both what they may have expected and what they faced on-site.

The role of volunteers

Participants' descriptions of their placements varied. Regardless, the descriptions of role of the volunteer by the volunteers themselves were often relatively similar to my accounts of the placements, as described in Chapter Four. Main similarities in content generally related to recounting the duties the volunteers fulfilled at each placement. At the orphanage that included washing the

children, playing with them, feeding them, cleaning the cribs and such, often finding ourselves getting spattered by various things, with Anna jokingly mentioning 'baby poo' in her interview. At the teaching placements this meant being put into a classroom without any advance knowledge of what the children were learning and simply being told to 'teach them'.

There were different concerns noted by volunteers at each placement. At the orphanage Stacey noted the potential of the permanent staff to rely upon the volunteers, as well as the challenge for volunteers, who lacked training in how to handle the small children:

The work here... well I think they, [the orphanage], does kind of rely on the volunteers. I think we do a lot. Where they also trust us with handling the babies, and doing pretty much everything with them, 'cause we were talking about it and, I mean in [my country] [...] probably, you wouldn't just, for hygienic reasons and all kinds of things, you wouldn't be allowed to [...] just go in there and act with the kids [...] but...

I am not certain of the others, but I was not made aware of any screening process used and also received no training in how to handle the small children prior to my placements. It seemed assumed that we would somehow already know prior to our arrival. This appeared to make some of the volunteers nervous, as some were afraid of doing something wrong and hurting the children. However, the placement was generally as expected with typical duties, though some participants described it as more intense and/or tiring than expected: As Leanne said, "*I think there are two sides of it I really like the work, I really love to work with the children, and they're cute and it's been... the other way it been [...] [exhausting]*". As with Leanne, some of the volunteers at the orphanage enjoyed their placement but found it tiring, either because of the energy of the children, the climate which they may not have been adjusted to, or a combination of those and other factors.

At the teaching placement the biggest challenges were being expected to teach a class without knowledge of what had been taught before, what the students were supposed to be learning and the fact that the volunteers may not have had any training on how to teach children beforehand. As Theresa said,

Well now I really like it and I'm, and I'm settled in it and used to it. At first I was just like 'oh, okay. I'm teaching. I didn't expect that.' But, um, but it's alright now. But I, I'm really enjoying working here. Um, I think the kids here need some good teachers and I just think it's good that volunteers are willing to come and, and do what they can to help them. [...] It's so different trying to adjust into it though because you come and you don't know what the kids know, and you don't know what they need to know next. So the first few days were just kind of experimenting and trying to figure out what their knowledge base was so that we could work off of it. But now that that's settled everything's going smoothly and they seem to be learning well.

As Theresa mentions, she adjusted to it after a short time, which was similar to my own experience in the teaching placement. Unfortunately, given that I was only there for a short time the adjustment took a good portion of my time at the school.

Some reflections on the experiences were only recognized by the volunteers later in their experience in Ghana, particularly as some volunteers neared the completion of their trip. These participants started to look forward to what would happen after the conclusion of their time in Ghana. The next section discusses these issues.

5.1.1.3 After the Volunteer Experience

Based upon my past experience and speaking with others with experience volunteering abroad I have found that upon return the volunteer faces a variety of questions, both internally and from people in their lives back home. With this in mind, I asked the volunteer participants some questions regarding expectations of their return home, including whether they felt that they had accomplished what they intended and what they would tell others back home. Additionally, elements of assessment of their experience were expressed through personal changes/impacts as well as discussion of their future plans. These are presented in the following sections. These conversations also led participants to provide a variety of recommendations and a number of future plans for growth/development of volunteer tourism in the area. These are identified in Chapter Six under the heading *Looking Forward*.

Accomplishing Goals

When asked about accomplishments, Anna, Danielle and Theresa felt that they had achieved what they wanted, while Stacey and Leanne did not. As previously noted, Danielle and Anna also appeared to feel that their expectations of their impact were quite realistic because of their past experiences. Anna said this:

Well I think I had a pretty realistic expectation of what I was going to accomplish, which is just, to me, a little bit of a... you know... small part of helping this organization run and getting things done on a day-to-day basis.[...] I think I pretty much accomplished what I thought I would.

Importantly, the first time volunteers in the orphanage, Stacey and Leanne, did not feel they had made the difference that they had wanted to make when starting out on their trip. As Stacey haltingly put it:

I had the idea to, kind of leave a mark. Or well... to, I wouldn't say change something, but to achieve [...] I think it's just... yeah. No matter if I would have been there or not it didn't make a lot of difference.

Later Leanne phrased it slightly differently with some assistance translating, saying,

I came here and thought I, I could make the world better and then change a lot... and, and make the babies happy and I don't know. It's... [Not up to the point you would like it to happen]. Yeah. But it's okay. It's okay. Now I know I can't change.

This may be seen as an example of unrealistic expectations and the relatively negative/ disappointed response when the expectations were not met. This could be because they had very little material on which to base their expectations of what they might accomplish and, as a result, they both showed a wish to make a bigger change than one may realistically be able to do in a single trip. This may give credence to the idea suggested by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) that past experience figures in to future expectation building and that this may be applicable in the case of volunteer tourism. Anna made a comment that appears to support this idea:

I think my expectation of really accomplishing anything as a volunteer has changed. I think that the real purpose of the volunteering is more to raise awareness. Yes, we are obviously getting a lot done in terms of feeding babies and there are concrete things that we are doing that need to be done, but in terms of like really changing anything I don't think so except maybe attitudes. [...] I think there is a spin-off effect from that.

This may show that while Anna's expectations of her effects on the community had changed from her first trip to perhaps become more realistic in her future actions. Danielle made similar comments and often used her past volunteer trips to Cambodia and other locations as something of a benchmark in describing her experiences in Ghana.

While past experience may have an effect on the volunteer's expectations, their initial motivations must also be considered. This may, in part, explain why Theresa felt she had accomplished what she had wanted while in Ghana while the other first-time volunteers did not. This is how Theresa responded to the question of accomplishment of her goals,

I wanted to come and decide what I wanted to do for school and for the rest of my life basically and I felt like I needed to try volunteering, try teaching a little bit before I could decide if that's what I wanted to do and I think it's helped me decide on the path I need to do.

This shows a primary motivation to test or develop her own skills rather than the broader expectations of Stacey and Leanne to change how things were in the community they visited. The goals that Theresa had were also more internal rather than external, which left her in greater control of the outcomes of her decision-making in volunteering based upon the motivations driving her.

Bringing home the message

As word-of-mouth is one of the most common ways by which volunteer tourism is promoted (Lyons & Wearing, 2008) the volunteers were asked what messages about their trip they would convey to others. Put simply, all of the volunteers said that they would likely talk mostly about the positive aspects of their travels and recommend that others participate in volunteer experiences. Leanne put it most simply, saying, "*I think if I'm, if I'm back home everything, what... what I am telling is more, mostly great.*" "You have to go there!" Stacey said something similar, though she spoke more directly about the fact that the bad things that she may have encountered may not be told to others, 'bad'

experiences including a pushy salesperson, and a communication issue with her local coordinator, both of which will be discussed later in this chapter. When thinking about what she would recount she said this,

Well, first of all I think that you pretty much delete all bad things that happened to you, so it's always great, such an experience afterwards, but no [...] I think it was a great idea and a good thing to do and I enjoyed a lot of things and even though there were some situations where it was... totally [overwhelming], or something, or... emotionally, yeah. [...] Altogether it was really good and I would probably do it again. But the next time I think I would go with somebody I know from home. That would, just... yeah. [...] Because it was hard to say goodbye every time I met a new volunteer.

Such ideas being projected to others help them to form ideas of what such experiences are like. In that way they can help build expectations for what could be considered as a new wave of volunteer tourists, though in some cases the accounts may be more positive than was thought by the volunteer during the experience itself. This aspect is also particularly important if word-of-mouth promotion is as big a factor in this form of tourism as Lyons and Wearing (2008) suggest.

Often, the volunteers did not seem to know where to start talking when it came to describing their experience. As Danielle put it simply, “*I can say in one sentence, it's too much.*” She had been writing online in a blog with long accounts of some of the things that she had been experiencing while on her trip, even to the degree that she told me laughingly that she had apologized in many of her blog entries for the length of the messages. After she took a few moments to gather her thoughts more about what she would say to them, this is what she said:

What I think I will tell them is, first of all, you can't describe it. So, and then I say I will try to describe it. That if you really, really want to know the Ghanaian people you have to live with them, work with them, and if you have done that you will embrace them. And that's the way it went here with me. So, that's... that's the first answer I will, I will give them to that question. And after that more detailed.

This comment leads to the idea of whether the individual would recommend the experience to others. All of the volunteers did say that they would recommend it when asked, though some expressed more caution for those wishing to try it. Theresa had no such issues when asked what she would say if someone talked to her about wanting to go, simply saying, “[G]o for it. Try it. You know? Yeah, yeah... I definitely think, definitely go for it.” As mentioned before, others felt the need to temper their recommendations with some advice regarding how to find the organizations and tips on what to expect and/or plan for. Anna had a few points to make with regards to this

Don't have grandiose expectations that you are really going to change anything through volunteering, because you won't. [...] I think also, don't be afraid of the local culture. Don't be afraid to talk to people. At least in Ghana. [...] Things are different in different countries.

This could be seen to relate back to the concept of previous experience and also relating to word-of-mouth promotion in this form of tourism. Such comments from more experienced volunteer tourists may help to build more realistic expectations for those to come, but often the negatives appear to be glossed over, as suggested by Leanne and Stacey. Additional words of advice for a person thinking about engaging in such an experience were offered by Anna later when she said that she would recommend the experience, but with a few reservations. Those reservations she felt could be addressed mainly by “*trying to find out accurate information about what you’re going to be doing and who you’re going to be interacting with while you’re here.*” This relates to some of the communication challenges that she encountered in her experiences that will be discussed later in *Section 5.3*.

Anna was not the only volunteer who had advice to offer anyone thinking about participating in such an experience. Theresa made a recommendation for those thinking about volunteering regarding the length of stay. As she put it, the trip should be,

At least a month long. I think. No less but I might be nervous to try it for longer if you’ve never done it before. Just because if you say you’re going to go for a really long time, like six months or so and then maybe there’s someone out there that would hate it and then they’re stuck for six month. So, you know, for the first time maybe go small and see what you think.

The duration of stay for volunteers was not only a concern mentioned by the volunteers, but also by various other stakeholders, which is discussed later in the chapter.

For the most part all of the volunteers noted how such experiences are good for a person not only in terms of the cultural experience and helping others, but also in terms of personal development. As Danielle put it,

What I would tell them is that it’s an excellent experience that if you want to know the culture, if you want to actually know the people, not only by travelling but also working with them then volunteering is an excellent way to do it. [...] [B]ecause you can do something good for society, but also because it’s for your own experience. And because you travel with an organization [...] it can be very convenient if you... if you are travelling alone. So, it has, like, many... [Positive attributes].

Finally, Theresa put it even more simply, saying this about her own experience and what she would say to someone thinking of doing such a trip:

[I]t was a really good experience and I think it could be a really good experience for everyone to try at least once. To go volunteer just ‘cause it, you know, it changes you and opens your eyes to whole different things you didn’t know about and didn’t know were out there and, um... yeah, I just think it a good character building experience.

This comment touches on some of the concepts discussed in the next section, where I describe the impacts that the volunteers could foresee their experience in Ghana having on their life upon their return home.

Changing Outlooks: Impacts on the volunteer

The final set of questions related to any impacts the experience would have on the behaviours of the person upon their return to their home country. All of the participants felt there would be some impact, such as using less water, and appreciating what they have more, though to what degree this would be the case varied. Anna talked about the basic things that might change upon her return, as tempered by her past experience, saying “Well, at first I won’t waste any water, after carrying it on my head, badly. That will fade over time. All of those sort of careful behaviours will fade over time.”

Others also mentioned careful use of water after their experience in Ghana and that they may appreciate the things that they have at home more. As Stacey put it,

I think in a lot of situation I will think back to how our other people live, or especially, as honestly, I don’t know if I can bath in a tub again using so much water after [...] I saw how people use their water here. And also when I see people going along the food store [...] I think it will affect my thinking and just different situations.

Leanne was unsure about how it would affect her but was sure that the time that she was spending there would have an impact on her in the future. Danielle talked about how it might change the way in which she viewed people of different ethnic backgrounds, saying that she might understand where people are coming from better and perhaps be more open-minded. As she put it,

[S]ometimes I was wondering about some people who were living in my country. I was like ‘I don’t understand you’, like ‘why are you looking at me like that?’ are you angry? You know. [I was] afraid to talk to those people, and not, not because I didn’t like them, but just because they were not my thing. And now I am like, yes, I think [...] I understand you now.

This illuminates some of the internal changes that volunteer tourism experiences can have on the individual and supports Wearing (2001) who outlines some of the effects that such experiences can have on the voluntourist. As Theresa aptly described it,

I don’t think you can go through any kind of experience like this without it having an impact on you, some kind of impact. I mean, like I said, I think it just kind of opens your eyes as an individual and you see what’s out there. And you can really appreciate what you have and what you don’t have. And you have knowledge of what other people don’t have and then you can maybe do something about it or you know, help other people if, if you feel so led to do so. Whereas if people don’t know that it’s out there, I mean you’re told, you’re told. Everyone’s told ‘oh, there’s people starving in India, there’s people sick here’ but if it’s just a news report or it’s just a TV report it doesn’t really get to you as much as going and seeing it and experiencing and meeting with people. So, that, that’s what really changes you, is seeing it. Not just being told.

The next section discusses the future plans of the volunteers in light of their volunteer tourism experiences regarding their future involvement in volunteer tourism.

Future Plans

While all of the volunteers stated that they would recommend the experience to others, asking if the volunteers had plans for future volunteer tourism trips garnered more in depth reflections. Anna and Danielle both felt that they would likely not participate in a volunteer tourism experience again, though they might consider it if an optimal situation arose. Theresa said she would not do another because she had learned what she had wanted to from the experience she had in Ghana. And Stacey and Leanne both expressed interest in doing another trip but both stated that they would likely not travel on their own again. As Stacey said, *“Altogether it was really good and I would probably do it again. But the next time I think I would go with somebody I know from home.”* Leanne also mentioned that she may do volunteering again but may not go through an organization. This may come as a result of communication challenges that she and Stacey had experienced with their organization.

In terms of the reasoning of Anna and Danielle to potentially not engage in further volunteer tourism experiences, this also varied. Danielle mentioned that this was her fifth such trip and indicated that she may have achieved what she had been intending to with her volunteering, though she would likely continue to travel more. She was not opposed to the idea of volunteering though as she added, *“But if some good opportunity comes up for volunteering and it sounds good, then yes, maybe I would do that again”* indicating that it is still a consideration but only under certain circumstances. Anna, on the other hand, while still saying that she would consider doing another such trip noted a change she intended to make in the direction of her volunteer work, exploring altruism in a different form.

This suggests that volunteers may try such an experience several times up to a certain point. This point comes once they find that they have done what they wanted or that, alternatively, their efforts may be better spent in other ways that they feel may help more. At that point/threshold they may cease participating in volunteer tourism activities. This likely relates to the expectations of the individual to achieve certain goals in their volunteer activities, and may encourage the volunteer to either continue or cease such behaviours dependent upon their past experiences.

Like volunteers, local stakeholders hold different expectations about their involvement in volunteer tourism and have different experiences both with volunteers and each other. As such, the next section discusses volunteer tourism through stages of the experience from the eyes of local stakeholders.

5.1.2 Ghanaian Group

As noted at the beginning of *Section 5.1*, often experiences are described in a fairly consistent sequential order. Clawson and Knetch (1966) posed five stages, from the initial thought of engaging in the activity and planning, travel to, participating in the activity, travel from and recollection or reminiscing. This sequence of stages through an experience can also serve to show some of the expectation building, expectation fulfillment or denial, and satisfaction levels within the various phases or stages. In the case of the Ghanaian group the stages were not the same as for the volunteers but there are elements that coincide with the stages of the experience shown with the volunteers. As such, the concepts that correspond with the volunteer stages will be identified in a sequential order in this section. The main sequential themes relate to the initial development of the host organizations, volunteers coming to the community, and the volunteer leaving. In this case, the stages are called *Initial Development*, *Volunteer Present in Community*, and *After the Volunteer*.

Again, this section moves through some sequential aspects of the experience from the perspective of the community members, organization members, and host families, which is referred to collectively as the Ghanaian group. This grouping has been created because all these participants were native to Ghana, and their accounts were generally similar although there were some differences, which are identified where relevant.

5.1.2.1 Initial Development

In this section, I present information regarding the involvement of the local stakeholders in initial planning and development of the various organizations. Also discussed are themes of building expectations, advance knowledge and issues of planning more generally. Despite the different perspectives presented by the stakeholders, there are important commonalities among these groups in terms of planning and development before volunteers arrive in the area.

Initial Development of Organization(s)

When asked about involvement in the initial development of the programs most participants said that they were not involved. This included individuals who hosted volunteers, those who were involved with the orphanage as well as members of the community. All of the volunteer organizations discussed by participants were international organizations not based in Ghana. These organizations sent volunteers to a variety of countries for experiences ranging from helping in orphanages, to teaching, to environmental action.

One organization member, Franklin, talked openly about how he got Organization A to become involved in Ghana through some of his efforts with some of his friends. Initially they endeavoured to establish some volunteer work through a small and more locally-based collective.

The project was mostly education-based as they focused on setting up schools in villages around the northern city of Tamale. Also, as there was a strong volunteer interest in caring for babies and small children outside of schools, a connection was developed with the orphanage as a placement location for those interested in that aspect of volunteering. This orphanage was the one identified in Chapter Four and is the location around which the majority of interviews for this study took place. After establishing these projects Franklin and his group applied to have their projects become part of a larger international volunteer organization in order to help more people. He said:

[W]e have been working on our own project for about four years now and after working in this project you need a big organization that can help you move the focus or that can help you achieve your focus. Because to get volunteers to [...] a village or deprived community you need to get an organization that have the same vision or focus like you. So that brought us to get into contact with [Organization A]. [...] [They] realized that this is a good program [...] And not being just [to be] part of that program but [to] get someone who is committed, who is dedicated, who can sacrifice [...] to go help volunteers and to help the organization with the same vision. Not someone who just come on the program to look for money because other people may set their programs. And they want to be with the bigger program and they may look for, maybe, that organization who charges the volunteers a lot of money. And one thing I like about being with this organization is the focus is not on money, the focus is about how people can change lives and how you can go with a vision.

The latter part of this quotation shows some of his concerns about organizations and people who get involved with international volunteers with a focus on making money. He also expressed strong feelings that people need to care to be able to help the communities who wanted or needed help. When asked how the projects were determined he replied:

It's about love. It's about the feelings and the focus you have. It's about love and the feelings and focuses because there are so many villages and communities that need help. But you need to have a feel, you need to have a touch, [...] you have to know that this is the project that needs my help. So once you go to a village, for example, a village [doesn't] have a school, definitely you know you have to go there to help the village because that is the focus of what we are doing. And we don't just move when people come and call us to come to this village my children need books. You have to go see it and see how best you can help. And see whether these people need your help or not.

Later, when asked how the link was established with the orphanage that is the focus of this project he replied:

[W]hen you are talking about a[n] [orphanage], you look at a[n] [orphanage] that volunteers can really go there and have a lot of babies there. And you know I come from that side of the country. So obviously you get to know the [orphanage]. You sometimes visit them, as I told you, we in Ghana also do volunteer work as part of your teaching, as part of your service to the nation. So some people also work there and they will come and say oh this [orphanage] is nice and it can also... if volunteers want to come and work in the [orphanage] then probably [the village orphanage]

should be a place to send them because they have a lot of babies, in terms of babies in Ghana.

Most participants responded that they had not been involved in the initial development of either the orphanage or the volunteer organizations. The orphanage was founded in the 1960's and, as most of the participants were under 50, they had not been part of that process. However, a number of those interviewed mentioned that they knew that it was founded by a religious group and when it was established. They also expressed positive feelings toward the orphanage. As noted in Chapter Four, the orphanage focuses on child care for babies and young children from birth to age four, or even up to about age 7 when they are sent elsewhere for their care. Flint most fully described how the orphanage was started, saying:

Over time, in the whole thing, the project started with the order, [religious order], who started the project from the initiative money, from [...] prompting [by] the community. The community [...] realized a lot of children were dying after their mothers [...] would die at childbirth and for that reason they approached the [religious order] for, to do something about it. [...] And over the years it was a project for the [religious order] until the government decided, 'oh, it's a good thing for the government to support'. [...] [T]hat change, of the government coming in [has] been the ideal thing. And because consistently that system has [supplied] food, the center [has been] able to house children for four years and some may extend to six or seven years

After asking the host families more specifically about the organizations that brought the volunteers in to help at the orphanage, two of the hosts noted more involvement in the early stages. For instance, Robert and Mary described providing lodging for volunteers when the organization was new to the area. Myles said he played a role in Organization B's decision-making structure prior to becoming a host, but was not really involved in the initial development. Some of the hosts did suggest they had less involvement than they wished. For example, Robert said:

Yes, first we were expecting that since the host family is the backbone, I will say, the backbone of the organization, we were expecting that they would treat us well. They will make sure that we've been given, you know, the necessary resource that would make the volunteer's stay, you know, better for them. That's what we were expecting from them.

This is tied into the issue of communication, which is explored further later in the chapter, but also supports a concern about the needs of the host family.

In general, while early involvement in development by the stakeholders was not present in most cases, expectations of the organizations and volunteers did develop. Most local participants did talk about the elements of this initial expectation building processes. These are discussed in the next section.

Building Expectations - Advance Knowledge or Preparation and Planning in General

As noted above, expectations are a key part of the volunteer tourism experience. This is true not only for the volunteers, but also others who are affected by volunteers traveling to their community. Again, these expectations are built based upon the information available (Wearing, 2001), which can include structured/intentional research from various primary or secondary sources as well as others. Such research could be based upon information read from books, found online, or even upon hearing descriptions from other people (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). It is also possible to develop expectations by subconsciously absorbing information through second-hand sources. In this way one may see things like the perpetuation or reinforcement of stereotypes, as suggested by Raymond and Hall (2004) to be a concern in this form of tourism.

I asked participants whether information about the volunteers was provided by the organization(s) and what they expected based upon that information. Participants described knowing that volunteers would be culturally different from them, particularly in terms of food, dress and behaviours. For example, Robert was told,

[T]hat we should know that the volunteers are not from, you know, our place. They are from a different background. They have different cultures and everything, so we shouldn't expect... you know... much from them because [...] they are not, you know, conversant with the situation here and other things. So, if we expect that the volunteers will come, they will stay with us and then be [...like...] the people we've lived [...] around for a long time that is not possible because they are coming from a different background with different culture and everything.

Additionally the hosts were told what they needed to provide the volunteers with, what facilities were needed for them and more about what the host should expect. As Samantha said,

[H]e said about their rooms. They want a room with toilet and bath and then a net. Then they are feeding too. I should... the food that I will eat; I give some to them also. [...] [The organization] said when they [the volunteers] come they will be going to the orphanage, sometimes they will be travelling, they will be travelling, they will be on tour. [...] And come back, they will be going to Tamale, Cape Coast and so on. So after their arrival they will go.

As noted by Mary, they were often told the basic details of who was coming, such as whether the volunteer was a male or female, how old they were, and where they were from. Often however, participants were not given information beyond these basics.

The hosts were also often told that the volunteers would want to learn about the culture so teaching different elements of that to the volunteers was anticipated by the host. As Monica explained,

I was told of how to feed them, how to stay with them. I was informed that it's a volunteer, whereby at the same time they want to know about our culture, so I have to teach them how we cook, the food we eat, the language, take them around maybe to see the environment and all those things.

This cultural element will be discussed further in *Section 5.2* but is important to note in this context as well. The information provided to the hosts can be important in a few ways. It helps the family to prepare physically for the volunteer, but, perhaps more importantly, starts to develop expectations regarding the visitors.

From planning and preparations we move into the time when all of the stakeholders interact most directly. This is when the volunteers come into the community.

5.1.2.2 Volunteer Present in the Community

Perceptions and/or Expectations about the volunteers

While a number of the Ghanaian participants described having had limited exposure to volunteers, many did have a general sense of what the volunteers were in the community to do. When asked, many guessed that the volunteers were there to help with the babies and noted a number of the tasks the volunteers were doing at the orphanage, though most expressed some uncertainty about their answers.

Most community and host family members noted the basic duties fulfilled by the volunteers. As Monica noted, “I know that [the volunteer] goes there to help the attendants to cater for the kids. Bathe them, feed them, put them to sleep, play with them, teach them.” This was commonly known by the host families, but Ernest and Albert, two of the community members were not certain, as they had only been told by the volunteers that they were helping at the babies’ home prior to this interview. They were not entirely sure of what the duties of the volunteer were there. As a result Ernest gave a broader response to the question, saying,

[M]y own understanding is... [you've] given yourself, [...] to help someone... or to help, like here, if you come for instance, you have a volunteer teaching, for that one, you go in, they won't pay you, you go and teach, like [at the orphanage], you go and teach them, after that you come home, they will just give you maybe food that you eaten that very day come home for maybe about three months, that one is volunteer. You have come. You have just donate yourself for the community, to help them.

This may show that while recognizing that the volunteer is there to help the community members may have a different impression regarding the duties of the volunteer than what the volunteers are actually doing. In this case, at the orphanage, we were not officially teaching the children but fulfilling other basic needs of the children, such as changing diapers, feeding and bathing them. We did mostly use English in the orphanage, but were not specifically using it in a teaching manner. If the community members knew more about what we were doing at the home it might have been interesting because, in many cases at the orphanage, the volunteers were doing jobs that could have just as easily been done by locals. But in the end, one of the host mothers summed it up this way,

So if they are here, they are here to help the babies. They are here helping the community. So if they are doing, they are cleaning the babies, they are washing them, just giving them... making them happy. They are doing for the community because at the end of the day the community will be sound because the babies are happy.

When talking to participants who were affiliated with the orphanage, they mentioned these duties, but also said that in some cases they knew that the volunteers had contributed financially to the home and created international links to further assist the orphanage. As Flint explained,

We've had several volunteers and normally, most come in, most of them come in to give physical support, like extending a hand at the home, feeding the babies, showing cleaning and other things. Teaching or giving or... and others have also been financial support. Where they come in and then they realize there's, there's an issue with a building there. Some coming in and pushing it, putting some of those structures there, some coming in and giving other financial support to ensure that certain facilities are provided. Some also, more or less, help, also help in linking the home to the international community. And some also, more or less, they come in with job training, some come in with expertise and, more or less, help the home in picking one or two kind of skills that helps in their work.

This speaks to the beneficial nature of volunteering and also identifies some of the areas in which volunteers may be appreciated by the locals. Some outside of the organization may also be aware of such benefits, in terms of resources, but such references appeared infrequently.

Additionally some participants had specific ideas and expectations about what the volunteers *should* be doing. Particularly, Shawn, Ernest and Flint wanted the volunteers to make sure that they were doing what they were supposed to be doing. As Shawn, one of the government workers, put it,

Oh yeah. They, they are here for a purpose. They are here [...] to perform certain functions and I expect that they stick to those functions and work because at the end of the day they are going to be assessed on that basis. Then I also expect that they can find, or they live within the rules and regulations governed wherever they, they, I mean wherever they find themselves. Yes. So that's living within the laws of the community and going about their normal functions. I think that is the general expectation.

Ernest, one of the community members echoed this sentiment, also noting that there may have been issues in the community in the past with volunteers who may not have done what they were there to do. This was a concern that he expressed in this way,

Like for instance, when they come, some people may come and do what they send them to come and do. Like what you are doing here. Others too, they will come, and they send them to come do all... the people that they used to come here, they don't do that. Yeah. So what say I now is all of them, they are coming, they should come and do what they are here for. [...]Well... what we're expecting them... it should help if they are coming to their work. Do that to do help, and help the childrens too for the development of the country.

This statement speaks to an expectation for the volunteer to keep volunteering as a main focus of their time in the community. Additionally, Ernest questioned the tourism-related visits to other locations, as he felt that the volunteering should be the main component of the volunteer's time in Ghana.

Flint described a desire to encourage the volunteers to maintain a certain level of decorum and discipline as they can be seen to be a representative of the organizations and the orphanage in the community. He expressed himself thusly,

Really, the volunteer comes in and has something to do with [the orphanage], more or less, our name, our, our... what we represent, [...] has something to do with the church and the state, it's attached to the person. Definitely we want that volunteer out there in the community to be, more or less, an ambassador. What is good, what is excellent, what is perfect. They may be teenagers who want to explore it. Explore the world and see what is out there. To enjoy themselves or whatever but, that decorum, discipline must be there so that at least, it brings them to a level where people will give them that respect. [...] So far no kind of bad report has ever come either from the host families out there or from the community as for volunteers who have ever tied themselves here and even then they have the opportunity to travel outside this community. They stay safe and they come without a problem.

Additionally his comment relates to the concept of respect, as he notes that acting with discipline and/or decorum may help to gain respect. This also relates to the idea of cultural differences and the concept of respect, discussed further in *Section 5.2*.

Along similar lines, some of the people who have had direct contact with the volunteers at the placement noted the work ethic of the volunteers. They were largely impressed and wished for such enthusiasm to continue. As Walter enthusiastically said,

What surprised me was, you know, that they are serious in the work that they are doing. [...] helping the babies. That was fantastic. Yes. That was fantastic. Not all people can volunteer and do such a work yeah, not everybody. And it was fantastic, fantastic work. So, I am surprised about that and would like to encourage it.

Participants made a number of comments regarding the number of volunteers in the orphanage. Because of the variability in volunteer numbers, it can sometimes be challenging for the orphanage to plan. However, I was also informed that they can manage without the volunteers though they do help a great deal while they are there. Rose, in talking about the number of volunteers and the timing of their help, said this,

Normally we receive as many as, between 10 and 12 volunteers at a time. And these days, most of them don't stay long. At first, supposing you get volunteers who stay for two months, three months, I sit down with them and I reason with them and tell them you can divide yourselves into three groups. Maybe some of them sometimes choose to come on night duty. Yes. But these days, volunteers don't stay long. Yes, so I normally don't force them to go on either night duty or come in the afternoon alone.

This could illustrate a change that she has experienced in terms of the decreasing length of volunteer stays, but is an area in need of further study. Also, as the volunteer numbers are variable, it is

important to ensure that the orphanage can manage without them if necessary. This would reduce the risk of dependence on such a highly variable group, as is a concern in volunteer assisted facilities generally. In this case I was assured by both Flint and Rose that there were enough permanent staff to take care of the children when volunteer numbers were low, though volunteers helped offer better services and care when present.

In terms of the role of volunteers from the perspective of the orphanage, Rose explained that the job of the volunteers is, “*to support the permanent staff by caring for the babies.*” This is important in the care of the children as she notes at one point that, “*the permanent staff for the home are not sufficient, so when the volunteers are around they do support the program very well.*” This was likely mentioned as the tasks would take a great deal longer with low staff numbers and could cause some issues with feeding times and the like being delayed. Additionally, issues with inadequate numbers of people for supervising the children sometimes resulted in the children having to stay in their cribs longer than would be ideal, as Stacey, one of the volunteers suggested during our interview.

Rose, when talking about the volunteer organizations, noted that they receive volunteers from five different organizations, though frequently it is only a few from two of the organizations at a given time. With all of this in mind she does go on to say that, “*The variation [in volunteer numbers] doesn't affect the organization very much because we receive them as supporting staff so if they are around or not the work continues.*” This is because permanent staff would continue caring for the children, regardless of whether there are volunteers there or not. Also, this can be seen even in her earlier comment that there are shifts that are often not handled by volunteers, particularly the night shift. Flint also notes that the volunteers are an asset because it eases the pressure on the workers at the orphanage, but also reiterates that the home can manage regardless of the variation in volunteer numbers, saying,

Fortunately, with a low or high number, does not directly affect the home. Say that, with or without the volunteers the home can have enough hands to run itself, but what happens is that once there's enough volunteers it eases the job [...] on the workers and once there's less they come and share with the few. But the more, the easier for the workers again.

This shows an idea that the volunteers do help to make things better in the orphanage and that these participants seemed eager to continue having the volunteers involved. In general most of the Ghanaians expressed a wish to have more volunteers in the area and/or have more interaction with the volunteers. This concept of communication or interaction between the local groups and the volunteers is discussed more in *Section 5.3*. Also, in terms of the number of volunteers in the area Beau wanted to bring attention to this, saying,

You know, one thing, the volunteers, as I know, as of now are not, they are not be coming as we expect. They are few. [...] we can count about 6 to 10 volunteers. If it can become... do something about it to the extent that the number of volunteers coming in will get up to 20 to 30. And it, it can do something. It can help a lot.

This might have something to do with the additional ideas many of the locals interviewed had for volunteers. They suggested a number of ideas for which they requested further/more volunteer assistance. These are discussed further in *Section 5.4*.

Additionally, Robert, one of the host family members, talked about what he personally, and also what he thought the community expected of the volunteer, saying

Our expectation, you know, from the volunteers is that they will come; work to improve, you know, the standard of the community. And that is what, exactly what we are getting. Every volunteer who comes around makes sure that he or she does what is expected of them and that is, that is it.

Finally Rose appeared to believe, like Robert, that the behaviour of the volunteers was generally good in the community. She attributed this, in part because of the information provided by their organizations, saying,

We normally don't get naughty volunteers; excuse me to use that word. Almost all the volunteers that come here, they try to behave well. Because they normally, their coordinators usually advise them on what to do, so more often than not we don't normally get naughty volunteers.

This comment also relates to the information provided to the volunteers by their organizations relating to cultural differences as are discussed in *Section 5.2* and communication in *Section 5.3*. However, one particular aspect of this type of information provision is through orientation programs, which are often provided at the beginning of a volunteers stay, and are discussed in the next section.

Orienting the Volunteers: The Ghanaian perspective

Flint, one of the people affiliated with the orphanage, said that “[M]ost often volunteers are trained before entry, coming to Ghana. Most of them. And then before they undertake to do a job at the [orphanage] the home [has] its own way of orientating them. Yeah. How to handle the children, [...] how to feed, how to do other things before they are ushered into whatever it is.”

Unfortunately, this did not seem to be the case in practice, as, of those volunteers that I interviewed helping at the orphanage did not describe any formal training. As noted above, both Stacey and Leanne had taken part in an orientation program through their organization at the beginning of their trip, but were not given information on how to handle babies. Anna did not note any particular training and, myself, I was not asked if I had such training, nor was it offered through my program before I went to help in the orphanage. Also, there was not much training at the orphanage as they did not want to impose on the volunteers, as there had previously been volunteers

at the orphanage who had told the staff that they were not there to learn. This was the idea conveyed by Rose,

More often, more often most of the volunteers, they are not willing to learn from us. More often most of them tells us that they are here as supporting staff; they didn't come here to study or to learn. You know? So we don't force them to learn anything. But some of them, even some of them choose to go to the kitchen where the women prepare the food for the kids. You know? They go. They tell you they want to know how to prepare something like pamno soup. How they prepare banku, and so on, and so forth. And some will tell you, look, I didn't come down here to learn. I came purposely to come and support the babies. You know? Cuddling them, comforting them, you know. So we don't force them to do any other than what they choose, or what they want to do.

As noted by the volunteers interviewed for this study, this could be a problem, for not only the children, but also the volunteers and staff. Occasionally the volunteers may be looking for information about how to do a specific task but staff may not know that the volunteers do not know or understand what to do. In this situation there can be additional challenges because many of the workers did not appear to speak much English, as they may have only known Twi, the local language.

Additionally regarding orientation, those involved in the organization at various levels appeared to support the idea of an orientation, not only for the volunteers but perhaps also for others who would come into contact with the volunteers. It was not referred to as orientation specifically, but is spoken of more in the area of communication in *Section 5.3*. Put simply they encouraged more of a dialogue between the groups to encourage awareness.

Finally, with regards to orientation, the volunteer orientation was seen as a valuable aid in helping to keep the volunteers safe and helping them to understand what was happening around them. As Franklin said,

[N]ormally, you know village, the village programs need a very good orientation and the language because, one, if you don't even know the language it will take peoples time to go to the village and you need to take the person there, let the person have a feel because even if you give prior documentation about a village it's different from Canada it's different from America. The person may not have what you may want to do so you have to give a proper orientation first. The language, the pretence, before you take the person to the place.

This would help the volunteers find some sense of understanding, or at least find some bearings in a culture that may be totally unfamiliar to them. In some cases things may be more complicated than one would have anticipated and some orientation may be an invaluable resource. This would likely help the volunteer adapt and/or add to their existing expectations in order to make their expectations more realistic. Expectations would be expected to become more realistic based upon additional and, ideally, more accurate information being added regarding their new environment.

Now we move to ideas that local participants expressed in terms of being concerned for the well-being of the volunteers visiting. These concepts are discussed in the next section.

Concern for volunteers

While some of the volunteers expressed concern for their safety and well-being, there were also a number of Ghanaian participants who noted concerns for the volunteers. Most related to how the volunteers would adjust to the climate and food, though there were some additional ideas.

Many of the locals made inquiries in terms of my adjustment, as a volunteer, to the climate and food, with some even making jokes about the differences. But, even in joking, they wanted to ensure that I was adjusting well to those things and noted such concerns for other volunteers as well. Myles, Shawn, Beau, and Barry, were just a few of those with such concerns. Along with those concerns came a variety of recommendations by some of the participants. Most appeared to involve the volunteer finding a lot of information about Ghana and thereby, hopefully, ensuring the volunteer knew what to expect. Shawn covered most of the points raised by others in this statement:

What I would advise is that it's very good for them to get much information about Ghana and particularly there is our location, it's a... our nation is full of so many tribes. Tribes and different kinds of people. So getting an understanding of our culture is very, very important. Then knowing the, the course of living here then the heart that's involved is very, very important because sometimes a volunteer will come and say, "uh, is that how this place is like? Jesus Christ." There's certain things you would see and marvel. "How can people be here in this manner? How can people live in this way? How can somebody talk like this? How can somebody be here like this?" So many strangers, you see. But if one's understand the culture and the, the way of life here, then he comes he sees the door is open. Like, he has prayed acquaint himself with the issues so it doesn't become something extraordinary to him. So that information when they get it would be very, very good. And they come and they would enjoy their living. Ghanaians are very good, they are very hospitable people. I mean it's not good to talk about but I know our system. We are very hospitable. So, getting to know about Ghana first and getting to know whether they have the edge to cope with the environment.

Education was an idea suggested often, not only in regards to orientation for the volunteers, but also as a recommendation for other groups to deal with the different challenges that all of the stakeholders faced. Rose also noted the need to inform or educate the volunteers, simply saying,

You know, in reality, we wouldn't get each and every individual to behave, I mean, safe, you know. By all means you get some but if you explain things to them... you can move with him or her, so you always welcome any volunteer who choose to come and work with us here or to come in and support the program.

In addition to concerns about some of the cultural differences, which will be discussed further in *Section 5.2*, there were other concerns that were raised. One was a concern that the volunteers may not stay long enough to truly experience things in the village. With regards to this Walter recommended that, *"They should stay a month; stay at least one month or two month. Or, if they, if*

they can, if they do it, if they can stay for more than two month or even a year, yeah. I will be happy.” Flint noted a similar concern, but additionally noted that the volunteers often had a set schedule, so they may not be able to experience things within the community, or even in the orphanage, to their fullest potential. As he said,

[M]ost volunteers come within, for a specific period. And sometimes they come with their own kind of schedules. So they, it’s not easy for them to experience, as we talk, looking at babies, as to how babies were born, how families get together, what happens even these babies are returned to the families and all those kind of things. And food... what kind of food they eat in the community, how, what is the nutrient value, the historical background of each of these children, at least to adjust, so that once you come and meet those children like that when they go out of the home how do they relate with the community. For the first few days, in the... these are things because of the short time the volunteers will stay I will not, they will not easily concern themselves with and definitely they will miss a lot. On the children and in the community.

Finally, Albert brought up the issue of criminal activity regarding volunteers as the victims of theft or such as they can be obvious targets, being unfamiliar with the people and environment. About this he showed something akin to protectiveness, saying, “*I don’t want somebody to cheat you, so if I see someone who is criminal, I will tell you this one is criminal.*” In addition to Albert’s sentiments, many of the host family members and some organization members mentioned general ideas of keeping the volunteers safe, making certain they did not travel alone or go out at night without the host though they did not speak of criminal activity outright.

As such responses show, those more involved with the volunteers seem to be very concerned with their well-being. Along those lines, the next section discusses the involvement of local stakeholders, not only with the volunteers, but, more importantly, the orphanage.

Local Involvement in the Organizations

The local stakeholders expressed varying levels of involvement with both the volunteer tourists and the orphanage where the volunteers were placed. In this section the types of involvement of the different Ghanaian stakeholders is explored. In some cases involvement was not just considered to mean being actively, physically involved but involved in a less obvious way, such as by donation of money and/or supplies.

Myles, Samantha and Mary, three of the host family members, all noted that they assisted the orphanage through donations from time to time, but were not very actively involved in terms of physically assisting in the orphanage on a regular basis. Myles explained his involvement simply, saying, “*I do go there. And I remember when this Christmas I donated something to them. But I’m not involved deeply with [the orphanage].*” Samantha and Mary both described their involvement similarly. Also, while Ernest, Albert, Peter, Robert and Walter gave similar responses to the earlier

three, they did not indicate that they had physically helped in the orphanage. Ernest, Peter and Walter also all noted that they encouraged donations to the orphanage through their church affiliations, bringing those as well as their own donations to the orphanage. As Walter described the work of his church congregation, *“We are... we are involved in giving the clothing and food stuff to the babies.”* He also went on to say that in addition to donations, while he did not physically help in the orphanage, that he and others from his church attended meetings with people from the orphanage to talk about what needed to be done. Additionally, the area is quite religious in nature, so many of the local people noted praying for the orphanage. As Walter put it, *“[W]e are also praying that the Lord with give us the energies to help.”*

In terms of the involvement of those within the organizations and/or affiliated with the orphanage, the involvement was direct in administration or providing assistance for the orphanage. In the case of Shawn, Beau and Barry, they did not note much direct involvement within the orphanage, but Shawn did note that they offered assistance and advised the administration when necessary. All three also noted that they were responsible for overseeing activities in the orphanage and/or other activities in similar areas. Beau explained his own position in reference to the orphanage this way, *“I’m not directly involved with [the orphanage]. But I sometimes oversee some of the activities in that area, as it were.”* Flint also assisted mainly in an advisory capacity as a representative of the church, but did occasion more visits to the orphanage in his role than Beau.

The different levels of involvement of the local stakeholder group, even in the orphanage, may explain some variations in terms of the expectations of the volunteers and their role. This is because lower levels of involvement would likely result in less potential exposure to the volunteers, as well as less information to use in building realistic expectations of what the volunteers do as well as what happens in the orphanage.

Finally, the volunteer does leave the community, but similar to the experience of the volunteers, it appears that the experience does not stop there for the locals either. The next section discusses some of their perspectives regarding the time after a volunteer leaves.

5.1.2.3 After the Volunteer

For the Ghanaian stakeholders, considerations of the time after the volunteers have left the community were not as straightforward as they seemed to be for the volunteers. This is important to note as there generally are a number of volunteers coming into the community at the same time as others leave so there may not be an extended period after a volunteer leaves before the next volunteer(s) come(s). Primarily this section is concerned with the Ghanaian participants’ views regarding the volunteers and the perceived effects of the volunteers and volunteer organizations on

the community and/or organization. This connects with the idea of assessment and will be discussed in this section.

There are a variety of ways in which people can assess their experiences and the impacts of said experiences. Comparison to past experiences, finding out what other people thought and experienced to gauge how they saw the experience, looking at the effects of the volunteers in the orphanage and in the community in general, are a few of the ways identified in this study. These concepts are discussed in this section with regards to the perspective of the host community relating to the volunteers and volunteer organizations. These things, in the end, often appear based upon what expectations the person had and whether or not they felt satisfied with the outcome. In most cases the Ghanaian participants expressed positive sentiments regarding the volunteers and organizations and encouraged further such involvement.

Feedback and/or assessment of the programs appeared important to a number of participants, particularly those affiliated with the orphanage and organization. However, it was often only after direct questions relating to getting feedback from different parties regarding the volunteers or the organizations that the importance of this was noted. Organization members generally talked directly about assessment and/or feedback and means of collecting such information, while others from the broader community talked more about perceived impacts but did not recognize assessment directly.

Beau noted both direct and indirect elements of assessment. In terms of directly addressing this, he noted that they occasionally got feedback about the orphanage, but also noted at another point that there had not been any reports of real trouble with the orphanage or volunteers. Barry talked directly about the importance of assessment saying in reference to the organizations sending volunteers,

I would say that there are so many different organizations in the area that they work with so with these organizations normally when they send in these volunteers [...] for example, they should be a thorough and regular assessment for that is very important.

In this statement he stressed the importance of getting information from the different individuals to improve on things, and, not lead to, as he put it, “*overconfidence*” in something that may have faults.

The next two sections discuss more indirect ways of assessing impacts through exploring the perceived effects of volunteer tourism on the organizations and community. First I discuss perceived effects/impacts on the organizations, and then impacts on the general community.

Impact on the organization

Participants outlined a variety of impacts that the volunteer tourism experience had on their respective organizations. In terms of the orphanage, the volunteers generally help to fulfill the needs of the

children that the staff may be unable to do, and, in some cases, they offer financial support to the orphanage through donations, as noted earlier.

Volunteers impact the volunteer organizations in which they volunteer in different ways. In this case, the volunteers assist in funding organizations through a variety of fees and/or donations, thus allowing continuing activity or even expansion within the organization and its programs. The number of volunteers at a given time also changes how the organization functions, as summer programs are run for times of high volunteer activity in Organization A, while in slower times for volunteers some programs and/or activities were not offered. Volunteer activity can also change what may need to be done in a community, as success in a program may lead to a need to work on another as the primary aim may have been completed, thus changing how the organization works. Franklin notes some of these ideas, and adds to them, saying:

The organization is changing. All the projects, all the volunteers are making so many impacts. Like, with educational program like this many people are being encouraged or given the desire to go to school, because that is the most important thing here. If people don't have the desire they cannot do anything. Because you can take a child to school, if there is no desire, the child can never be in school. But people who live in villages or female, especially female, girls, are not encouraged to go to school. So once you give them the encouragement, the desire comes. Then you see the great impact that you are doing this child and I can tell you so many people have gotten chance to go to school through these programs.

Finally, it is also important to realize that not only the volunteers might make an impact on the organization. The host families that they place volunteers with, the others working for the organizations and, to a limited degree, the community all have impacts on the organizations. For the most part the hosts only alluded to this, but Robert presented this idea to me in a more direct way, saying,

I think we are making a big impact on the organization and then the volunteers as a whole because the volunteers, you know, themselves will attest to this... fact that we help a lot in everything that they do. In their work placement, in the house, in the community and everything. So, and I believe that without the host families the volunteering, you know, organizations are going to find it difficult working in the communities. Because, the host families contribute in everything, in any way, to, you know, the growth of the organization and the community as a whole. So I think our involvement is making a big impact.

In terms of effects, the orphanage and organizations do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a larger community, as seen in Franklin's earlier comment. This leads one to consider the broader effects on the community that the volunteer tourism experience can have, discussed in the next section.

Changes in the community

Generally the volunteers' contributions in the orphanage and community were seen very positively and further encouraged. But, while volunteers were seen positively, a number of the local people did not see much in terms of their effects outside of the orphanage. Monica and Myles both noted that the volunteers were helping in the orphanage but did not appear to be very involved in the community. Monica described this, saying

I would say that there is some improvement there because of how they handle the kids. When they are coming they bring items, toys, and those things so it would normally improve upon the life of the kids. So for [the orphanage] it's good. It's improving. [...] For the broader community we've been seeing them moving up and down, but I'm not sure they are involved in any social activities in the broader community.

However, there were a larger number that appear to take a broader stance in looking at the effects of the volunteers in the broader community. Ernest, Mary, Flint, Shawn, and Beau were just some of the participants who noted the positive economic impacts that volunteers could have in the community. As Shawn put it, “*Economically you are contributing then maybe you advise too. Sometimes you do advise or this, when we do it this way it will help. So you're actually helping.*” The idea of an economic benefit was often noted in combination with other effects that the volunteers might have on individuals in the community or the community as a whole. As Mary put it when talking about changes in the community because of the volunteers,

[S]ome of the volunteers, when they are here, some will bring books, pens, toys, and some people, some of the volunteers will be standing in front of our house and when a school girls and boys are passing they will give them books, they will give them pens, and the little ones they will give them toys. Just for them to know that 'we came'. And that, I really do appreciate [...] and when they are giving said things there is no discrimination. They do it when you come and get yours. And some of the volunteers, they... some from, two sisters from United States came here with a huge clothes, toys. They told me to go with them to a place that they would get children, so I took them to a weigh-in center where they check our babies and they donated it to the mothers of the children. And it, the community do appreciate that. And even in when you go out, they go buy from the community. Like you buy water that you drink. Sometimes in the afternoon you go and buy food so the community is gaining more. And we, the community members, we do appreciate because you are helping our [local] people.

As seen above, discussing the idea of how volunteers could help the broader community brought a variety of ideas to the table. It also fostered discussion about how volunteers could play a more educational or informational role, which is discussed further in *Section 5.4*. This contrasted a bit from the physically-oriented job of helping in the orphanage, though both were generally seen as positive. Beau spoke in a more general sense about placements outside of the orphanage, saying,

One of the major contributions of the coming of international volunteers is that it helps to ease some of the problem that we face in our educational sector. Especially in the deprived communities. Rural areas. It helps them. It ease some of them...

there is some shortage in, in certain areas there is some shortage of teachers. So in, the plan, when the volunteers come and work as teachers it support[s] them. It is easier. It also facilitates some of their teaching experience in that particular community.

There were a variety of placements in and around Ghana that offered teaching as an option for volunteers, though in the village that housed the orphanage the volunteers were mostly concentrated in the orphanage.

Also, others noted that helping the youth in their community was really helping them in the broader community. This was important to some, as Walter put it, “*the children are the future of the community.*” They expressed gratitude for volunteers wanting to help in this regard and encouraged further involvement of volunteers in such pursuits.

Finally, while most made jokes about relationships between volunteers and locals, a number of the people I interviewed spoke of one of the effects of such relationships. As I was told, a number of men from the village had ended up marrying some international volunteers and typically then moved to wherever the volunteer was from. Rose, Shawn, Beau, Barry, Ernest and Albert all noted that this had happened to people that they knew. Rose seemed to say that it had happened about three times to her knowledge. While this kind of situation was generally told laughingly it did appear to be on the minds of some of the people who came into contact with the volunteers in a more serious way. With regards to this, Albert told me of the marriage of someone he knew, saying,

Sometime a lot of volunteers came and it has helped some people. Maybe I know one guy he married one of the volunteers. He is now in Switzerland. They came like you came and be friend with him for long time. So later on they came and picked it up to Switzerland and then come back and then later they come and pick it home. So it's good for being friend to volunteers, maybe no one knows, you get ahead from them.

This may need to be addressed, but likely needs further study to see if this is an isolated event in terms of this community or if it happens frequently outside of this area. This appears to relate to a discussion by the volunteers regarding the interest shown to the volunteers by local people of the opposite gender. If this type of activity involving a volunteer and local being married has happened in the community on different occasions they may feel that they have a chance of it happening to them. And given the cultural differences, which are further discussed in *Section 5.2*, this possibility is generally seen as a positive opportunity for the locals. This could build and/or reinforce stereotypes, a concern noted by Raymond and Hall (2008) in this form of tourism.

Finally, many of these aforementioned points about the volunteers were noted in combination. Shawn laughingly told me of such a marriage but then became serious, underlining many of the ideas mentioned above,

Socially, one, I mean, just, just say this joke... one volunteer came and she got herself a husband and now they are outside [of Ghana]. So in a way that how some of the,

marriage... with some of the issues of marriage in coincidences, well she came and got herself a husband... and that's just on the lighter side. But I think they're actually contributing and therefore it is much appreciated, their assistance. Looking at the... already we have, uh, a problem with human resource. Yes. We have a problem with human resource, so their coming in to support us is very good. Yes. It's very good. They are in so many ways helping.

He also went on to talk about the economic benefits, such as accommodations and other costs that the volunteers would have to pay for, though occasionally asking me questions to fill in gaps in his knowledge of those things. This shows that while such benefits may generally be accepted the locals may still want to know more, a theme revisited in *Section 5.3*.

As noted at the beginning of the discussion of this time after the volunteer, there are a variety of ways in which people can assess their experiences. But, in the end, it all generally comes down to what expectations the person had and whether or not they felt satisfied with the outcomes or effects of volunteer tourism in the community. In most cases the Ghanaian participants expressed satisfaction regarding the volunteers and volunteer organizations. However, while many expressed some degree of satisfaction, many had recommendations for future development. These ideas are noted and further explored in *Section 5.4*.

As alluded to in this stages discussion, another overarching theme in the data was that of cultural differences between the visitor and host. This idea of difference appeared throughout the analysis of the data. The next major theme addresses cultural differences in more depth and considers these issues from the different perspectives that form the volunteer tourism experience.

5.2 Encountering Cultural Differences

One of the most obvious challenges faced by the stakeholders in this study, with relation to volunteer tourism, resulted from cultural differences. Some of these challenges appeared borne out of incorrect and/or unrealistic expectations. These are discussed in this section.

Experiences and expectations relating to cultural differences are broken down in this section into culture shock, whites, and respect. Such cultural differences were most clearly visible between the volunteers and the three groups comprising the Ghanaian group. As a result, similar to the discussion of the stages theme above, this theme is considered by the two main groups in turn.

Both groups had different expectations about the other in terms of how cultural differences would play out, or even whether such divisions existed. The responses of the volunteers were all relatively similar and will be grouped together under the heading of culture shock. Within the designated stakeholder group of Ghanaians sub-themes of contrasting cultures, respect, and confronting stereotypes will be discussed.

5.2.1 Volunteers

The volunteers appeared to have relatively similar experiences in terms of the major cultural differences. The most common response of the volunteers with respect to culture was regarding the stark differences between what they knew and the Ghanaian culture. This was especially the case upon arrival. As Theresa says:

The first few days my question was ‘what the heck am I doing here?’ And in fact, that actually kind of lasted for the first entire week. I think definitely you could attribute it to culture shock ‘cause it’s just so different, that I was like ‘wow... okay, wait, what did I get myself into?’ but over time [...] I kind of got the swing of things and figured out how things work here and I feel much more settled now.

As a result of this prominent sub-theme for volunteers this section will be further referred to in terms of *Culture shock*.

5.2.1.1 Culture shock

Similar to Theresa’s comment provided above, the most common volunteer response with respect to the culture was in regard to how different it was from what they were used to or expected. In some cases, participants described feeling overwhelmed. Leanne, Stacey, Danielle, and Theresa all made it clear that they felt it was completely different from their expectations and/or past experience, expressing this in varying ways. In many ways my own experience mirrored many of their sentiments. Leanne expressed this quite simply, saying, “*I think that the first and one of the main thing[s] is that it’s very, very, very different. It’s completely different [from] anything, which I, I have thought I knew or what I expected*”. Danielle’s impression went farther, comparing being overwhelmed by the difference in culture to a hurricane coming over her. Stacey expressed herself similarly to Leanne, saying, “*it’s just so overwhelming a lot of times that, yeah, it was [...] hard for me [...] to handle it all, to just [go] along and that was just that was very new as well.*” As seen above, Theresa shared similar thoughts regarding her first few days but said that she had adjusted fairly well after feeling that way for most of the first week. Danielle also noted that she managed to adjust. Her comments, provided below, note her progression from being overwhelmed to being somewhat proud of being able to adjust in the end:

I was like ‘what am I doing here?’ And not in a bad way because I know I can manage. And also, because I have been travelling a lot, so I know, it... it wasn’t horrible but I was like ‘okay [Danielle], just be normal and next time just stay home or travel with, with another person. You know. With two it’s always different than by yourself. And now I am like, no, you did a good job. It was good to come by yourself, so, yes. I adjusted.

Even with this degree of similarity among participants’ experiences, there were some additional unexpected culture-related elements. This often came through most clearly when I asked

participants about the most surprising thing they had encountered on their trip. The question was greeted with a good deal of laughter, but after a moment or two of thought, a variety of answers were shared. Anna hesitatingly admitted that the culture was actually more advanced than she had anticipated in terms of education and attitudes. Stacey expressed surprise over meeting so many volunteers from all over the world, but also said, with emphasis, that she did not expect to stand out as much as we did, saying:

I didn't... know that I was always going to be that... it's hard to say, but that 'white' in this country. When I was in the United States that year it was just easy to, get involved and to get integrated and we were, you just got there and felt home and here it's just... it's not that way.[...] I don't think I could ever live here 'cause I can't... I don't think they would accept me as a white person to really be involved in their culture and country and their families. So, yeah... that was a new, a very new experience.

Stacey also mentioned that the food was not what she had expected, as there was not much variety. This in turn caused her to consider food more frequently, thinking of what she would enjoy eating when she returned home. This seemed fairly common for the volunteers, but also connects to the perspectives of Ghanaian participants, as different food was also mentioned as a cause for concern by the Ghanaian groups, (see *Section 5.1.2 - Concern for Volunteers.*)

As illustrated by Stacey's comment above, most of the volunteers noted feeling like they stood out and this was made apparent in different ways. This appeared most obviously in how the volunteers were referred to by people in the community. Volunteers were categorized as "whites", often being called "white person" in the local language and expected to respond to such words.

Additionally, there appeared to be extra attention from local people of the opposite gender that may not have been expected. Theresa expressed surprise at such interest, saying:

I guess it's just funny how many people want to marry you. Which... it's kind of funny. But, yeah, I mean, I don't know if anyone experiences that in every country you go to, but it's definitely happened here... and it's been very surprising because I just don't expect someone I just met to be like 'will you marry me?' I've talked to you for five minutes. And actually think that you're going to respond positively. So that's very surprising.

I strongly identified with that statement in consideration of my own experience. Personally, as a volunteer in Ghana, I had a number of men I had never even seen before, much less talked to, ask me to marry them or yell out that they loved me as I walked down the street. In my journal I stopped recording these interactions, for the most part, after approximately half a dozen proposals and numerous declarations of love by complete strangers. There was some sense of disbelief expressed by the volunteers regarding the forward manner of the men, but past that there were a few additional responses. Generally the volunteers, myself included, appeared slightly flattered by the attention but also rather uncomfortable. This sometimes made the volunteers feel that they stood out even more

than before, but was occasionally seen as a source of humour, with a number of such stories being shared between volunteers.

Danielle's response to the question about what surprised her was intriguing. After saying that there were many different things that surprised her on her trip she singled one thing out saying:

I think it's a bit difficult...well the funny thing is that when I was reading about Ghana before I left, because I did some reading in the Bradt guidebook that they say, Ghana is so friendly, Ghana is... they make you feel welcome, Ghana this, Ghana that, and the first days I was here I was like, well the Bradt guide is not telling the truth. Or at least it's... it's not, you know, and... and now, after being six weeks here, I know, yes, they're right. Now I see, now I am starting to understand their culture. No I am starting to understand the friendliness, the welcoming, the... what I really like about their culture is the 'you are invited' phrase when they have a plate of food. And then I am like 'okay. This is really... the way people live here and I like that', so yes, maybe that's the surprising thing. At first I was like 'Bradt guide you are talking nonsense' and now, yeah.

This shows some of the process of expectation development and how meeting or not meeting those expectations can affect the individual. Sometimes it may take more time than the person may expect, as with Danielle, but when such positive expectations are met there can be a sense of relief or, even better, a sense of contentment/happiness and/or satisfaction, which appeared to be the case with Danielle.

Also, it must be noted that not all cultural differences were seen the same way by all volunteers. Some volunteers noted differences in timing of things, for example, they described the view that the word "soon" in Ghanaian culture was often a very loosely used term, as it could mean right away or a few days later. If someone gave a time for something to start it did not necessarily mean that it would start at that time. It could start at the given time but it could also start a few hours later. It was considerably variable when compared to conventional Western standards. For the volunteers that I spoke to this was sometimes a source of frustration, but occasionally also as a positive aspect of the Ghanaian culture. When asked about her favourite part of the trip, Theresa talked a bit about this flexibility, saying,

I like that it's pretty laid back. In fact I'd describe the whole country here as laid back, but, um, I mean, I'm able to go on weekend trips. And I just let them know that I'm leaving and there's a lot of other volunteers here so we all go together. So... yeah, it's, I appreciate how laid back it is. And they always said if I am not feeling well just tell them. I don't have to go to work. I can just stay at home and relax, which is nice. So I appreciate that, just the flexibility.

Also worth noting, some feelings of discomfort and guilt surfaced in discussion with some of the volunteers in relation to cultural differences. Feelings of guilt were noted by a few of the volunteers, but when asked to elaborate such feelings were then often dismissed by the volunteer as unimportant or irrelevant and/or the volunteer did not wish to discuss it further. This seemed to be of

a more personal and/or internal matter the volunteers may have felt needed to be dealt with within themselves. This sense of guilt may be seen to relate to the sense of obligation of western society to the 'less fortunate' referred to by Sin (2010) as 'social responsibility'. In general volunteering literature this concept has been noted by other authors in terms of local volunteer work (Hayes, 2002; Wardell, Lishman, & Whalley, 2000) and is discussed in the literature review. This concept has only relatively recently also been identified as a potential motivation to choose volunteer tourism over other types of travel (Sin, 2010). In my research the idea of guilt often arose in conjunction with the volunteer talking about local children and others asking the volunteer for things. Such queries to the volunteers by children and other locals appeared to be based upon a stereotype of the visiting 'white' person being affluent and able to give money and other goods freely. This cultural difference will be further discussed in the section outlining the perspectives of members of the Ghanaian group, but such requests were often seen as a cause of discomfort and/or an internal struggle for both myself and some of the other volunteers. As Anna expressed it:

I think now that I am a bit closer to sort of average Ghanaians in terms of, like, income level, education level, there is a certain amount of discomfort and guilt associated with that. Like, I know that they need money and I know that I can't do anything about it necessarily, and... you know... always struggling with that. I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I think that's reality of the difference between Canada and a third world country, but it, it does become uncomfortable sometimes. People occasionally ask me for money. But what I do is I basically talk to everybody. Kids, adults, it's a small minority of people that ask me for things. So I guess I just deal with it as well as I can and... you know... hope to be somehow be part of the solution.

Stacey wanted to share a seemingly more upsetting experience at the market, which she seemed to associate with similar cultural stereotypes, saying:

And what I also wanted to say, the people that want to sell something, they... they got really rude sometimes when we decided not to buy anything after they showed us paintings or whatever and I really thought... I don't know... they were supposed to be so friendly and that was just... it was pretty... really insulting sometimes when we... yeah. But, yeah [...] it was just something I experienced.

Again this could be related to an image of volunteers, or 'whites' as we were frequently referred to, held by people in those areas of Ghana. This concept of "whites" will be discussed further in the next section, with a look at perceptions regarding cultural differences between the volunteer and non-volunteer groups from the perspective of the Ghanaian stakeholder groups.

5.2.2 Expressing thoughts of Culture from the Ghanaian Perspective

As with most tourism experiences, cultural differences often become apparent when a tourist comes to a destination. This applies to volunteer tourism, particularly considering that much of volunteer tourism occurs in developing nations by people from Westernized countries (Wearing, 2001). The

issue of cultural differences was also very apparent in this study and came through in the interviews with Ghanaians. There was often an obvious divide between the locals and the volunteers in response to my questions. In discussion with the local people, I learned that the divide was put even more simply, as the locals and the volunteers were often simply described as ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’ respectively.

In this section I discuss some of the major cultural elements of the volunteer tourism experience that were presented by members of the Ghanaian stakeholder groups. First, I address the topic of cross-cultural respect and learning, in a section entitled *Respecting Differences and Each Other*. From there I move on to discuss some of the concerns of cultural differences in a sub-section entitled *Contrasting Cultures*. Finally, there were a number of misconceptions that I noted with regards to the local participants’ descriptions of the volunteers. This discussion has been placed under the sub-theme *Confronting Stereotypes*.

5.2.2.1 Respecting Differences and Each Other

When asked about the respect of volunteers most of the Ghanaian participants indicated that they felt that the volunteers were respectful of them, their traditions and/or customs. Monica and Myles each said that the volunteers that they had hosted were generally quite respectful. Monica talked about her volunteer specifically saying, “*The one who came to me, she was, she was very respectful, very calm and she was happy about tradition and the culture.*” Robert and Mary, whom had hosted many volunteers, both said that the volunteers with their current organization were generally very respectful. They referred specifically to their current organization as they had experienced some challenges with volunteers with a previous organization. However, they noted, in general, that most volunteers in the area were quite respectful. In this they referred to the way in which the volunteers conducted themselves in the community, but also their willingness to converse and take to heart advice given by their host family and others. As Mary put it, “*they are really respectful. And they care. They care. Well, you get a few people that [don’t] care, but it’s few, and [a] few doesn’t matter. And then one thing that I can also say is they obey. When you tell them not to do this, not to go by this place, they do [listen].*” Robert further elaborated upon the topic of respect saying,

Talking about the volunteers first: I believe volunteers, especially from [Organization A], are well behaved. You know, they are disciplined, and, you know, I cannot say anything, you know, bad about, you know, their involvement in the community. So they are well disciplined and they listen. When you tell them don’t do this they won’t do it, so they, they agree with the host family and then they move along smoothly in the community. So I cannot say much about that but I still believe there is room for improvement.

Mary also laughingly commented that while the organization may know about the culture that it’s, “[T]he volunteers who doesn’t know. So you have to tell them. You have to teach them your culture

so they will not commit any sin.” This she felt was part of her role as the host, to help the volunteer to learn about the culture and what was acceptable, and, conversely, what was not acceptable. Barry, one of the government workers, took a broader view of this saying,

I would say because as far as I am concerned I have not seen any volunteer in a confrontation with members of the community. So if similar thing has happened I might not tell that but as far as I am concerned based on my little experience that has not happened.

This appeared to be the view held by those who had more limited personal experience with volunteers. Beau, Walter, Albert, and Ernest appeared to agree, offering similar sentiments. Peter also had a positive view of the volunteers, and having had more contact with the volunteers than many of the other Ghanaian participants, offered a number of comments relating to the volunteers. In particular, in referring to the volunteers, he suggested that, “*Some are truly disciplined people. They respect the community. They associate well with them.*”

Also, when talking about respect one must realize that it only really works if respect is both given and received by all parties. This was brought to my attention by a comment from Ernest, in which he said,

They are respectful. For that one it's truly. They are very, very, very respectful. Yeah. Even we the community, we... those within the community we respect you and you people too, who have come to contribute, you respect us. Yeah. I cannot say all of them may respect you people but about 80-85 percent respect you people.

This was the only comment directly addressing respect in a two-directional way, meaning that he talked about mutual respect between the volunteers and locals. However, others also touched on this indirectly through comments made at different points in their interviews. For example, in talking with Peter he noted that the volunteers were respectful while, at another point in the interview, he expressed surprise and admiration at the dedication of the volunteers at the orphanage, saying

The most surprise thing is their frequent visits to [the orphanage]. Actually, when you go there and they are working. Fact, they are serious with their work. As for that I must give them plus. They are serious with their work and their time too. Their own time. Plus. You don't expect time. You don't expect time. You go there and you see them working on time too if it is seven that they are supposed to work you see them working. And they do have work too. Irrespective of how people are watching or they don't watch they are doing their own thing. What they have to do they do. As for that I give them plus. It is very, very wonderful. They should continue.

This comment by Peter also underlines some potential cultural differences in how the volunteers work in comparison to the local people, as he shows appreciation for the work ethic of the volunteers and his admiration illustrates an element of respect for the volunteers. And, in a project intended to help people, taking into consideration what the people want/need and/or expect rather than simply prescribing based upon what outside perspectives deem necessary is important. This

relates to meeting the expectations of the local people as well as those trying to help. The concept of mutual respect ties in to the experiences that the participants have with volunteer tourism, as respect can be seen to change how different parties interact. In this case such interactions could help address issues arising from cultural difference. The next section discusses some of these potential cultural differences, as expressed by the Ghanaian participants.

5.2.2.2 Contrasting Cultures – Cultural Understandings/Misunderstandings

Culture shock was identified as a major theme for the volunteer participants, as described earlier, and this section presents alternate views (from the local perspective). There was not as stark a contrast of cultural difference reported from the perspective of the Ghanaian groups. This may be because people in the host community who experience very little contact with volunteers, may not see the cultural differences as obviously, while the volunteers experience a complete immersion in a culture different than their own. And thus, the volunteers are more likely to experience and/or express more obvious cultural differences and/or challenges. Now, while it was clear there was not as stark a contrast of culture seen by the locals, there were still cultural differences noted by the Ghanaian stakeholders. These differences are discussed in this section.

In terms of the volunteers in the community it was recognized that there were differences between the people involved. In a broader sense Beau talked about how “*In every society and every community there is uniqueness of culture.*” Further explaining that there was a, “*uniqueness of the way of life,*” in every place and also talking about how he and others were surprised about volunteers coming to the community to help even though the volunteers are, “*not aware of our culture*”.

Robert and Myles both noted information that they were given when they initially started hosting volunteers. Most simply, they were told that the volunteers were different from them and the others in their community because they were not from Ghana. As Robert described,

We were told that we should know, [...] that we should know that the volunteers are not from, you know, our place. They are from a different background. They have different cultures and everything, so we shouldn't expect... you know... much from them because they... they are not, you know, conversant with the situation here and other things. So, if we expect that the volunteers will come, they will stay with us and then be, be like, you know, the people we've lived, you know, around for a long time that is not possible because they are coming from a different background with different culture and everything.

Some of the ideas of difference given by the local groups were similar to those noted in the stages discussion relating to the concerns the local participants felt for the volunteers. These included adjustments to the food and climate of the area. Myles noted a similar aspect of his experience with the volunteer he hosted. He explained, “*When she came there are certain foods that she doesn't like. There are other[s] that she like[s] very much. And those she likes I try to give. And those she doesn't*

like I never force her to take it or even try it.” This also showed that some of the eating habits of the volunteer impacted what was served by the host families as the volunteer may not be willing to eat some of the foods the host family would eat. As a result, there were additional concerns noted by the host family members, particularly Myles, Monica, Mary, in regards to differences in food that they would serve the volunteers to try to help them. These concerns were due to the fact that the host families may have to bear additional costs to feed the volunteers. As Monica put it,

Because they, some of them they come and they have problem. Even with the feeding. They will not like to eat the food that they family have been eating. That will put extra cost on the family. If the person will come and be ready to enjoy the food the family will be eating, fine, but some of them they don't want to enjoy the food. They said I don't like that, I don't like taking that, so it's like after cooking for the family you have to look for food for the volunteer. For some people that would be a burden on them.

In addition to differences in the food, the locals noted that the volunteers often engaged in travel to see other places in the country. This was noted as a concern by some, as Albert noted and as was discussed previously, while others appeared excited as the volunteers were able to appreciate different elements of the Ghanaian culture. Monica explained this in terms of the volunteer she had hosted, saying,

The one who came here... as for her, she only enjoyed [...] the whole country because she had the chance of traveling almost all through the regions. So she was happy with the culture, the traditions, [and] the tourism side. She was happy about that.

There was also an idea of cross-cultural learning put forward by many of the local people, both in terms of the volunteer imparting their knowledge, and in regards to the locals engaging the volunteer to learn more about Ghanaian culture. Myles, Monica, Robert and Mary noted the role that they felt that they had in helping the volunteers to learn about Ghanaian culture. Myles explained that in addition to volunteering, their organization talked about the volunteer coming as a cultural-exchange. He noted that at one point in his volunteer's stay he'd had a discussion with her with regards to helping her learn about the culture. He was concerned for her and encouraged her to experience cooking and other aspects of the culture, saying, *“you have to learn everything about the Ghanaian culture so that when you go you can say it and say to all.”* This appeared to be intended as a suggestion so that she would not regret missing out on some aspect of the experience. Some of the things participants described teaching to volunteers included: food preparation, how to eat the foods, how to sweep, religious celebrations, and many other traditions. They did this through dialogue and by getting the volunteers involved. Monica laughingly talked about her time teaching the volunteer who stayed with her,

She learned a lot from me. You know, once she came she doesn't know how to use the hands to wash. And I taught her how to do it. She doesn't know how to sweep. I

taught her how to sweep; how to carry water on the head; taught her how to eat fufu, banku, and all those things. So it was a learning experience for her.

As seen in the above example, the aspects of cultural difference were often talked about in combination. Mary also talked about many of the issues noted earlier, but one of her main points was an overall sense that while our cultures differed that we are all human beings. We all had emotions and were the same underneath though our skin colours or upbringing was different. And she also brought attention to the idea that, while the volunteer is there to help, others within the community are also doing their part to help, and respect must be given for that, particularly in the case of the host family. At one point she explained a number of these ideas, saying,

With the volunteers [...] I am trying to always adjust myself, even when they are doing something that I don't like, I try not to let them think that I'm doing it like... what I'm doing is bad. Because I am a human being I can offend them. But I always tell them that if I do something that you don't like let me know because I am a human being, just like you, and a friend. I'm not an angel. So, I know, maybe I have offended some people. And now they are not here for me to say I'm sorry, so wherever they are... inside of me if I have offended any volunteer I am sorry. That's what I can say. But I, I want them to... I keep on saying it, to love me as I do. And some of the volunteers, when they come... some of them when they come it's like they're in Ghana, they're in [the village] to help your community so say... our life. We are here to help. That thing I hate because you are here to help but I am also helping with the little things that I am doing. Though you've given me money to feed you I'm also, because I have a family to cater with and I have to also make sure that I put something on your table. So, all that I can say is, that if I have a chance. They have to respect my family and I will respect them, because, uh, like, in Ghana, in Ghana, like in Africa, a woman has to take care of the home. You... if I cook for the volunteer, if you tell me, [...] today I will eat spaghetti, and another volunteer can tell me, today I will eat yam, and my husband can tell me I will eat fufu. I will have to make all. That's Africa. So sometimes I need them to understand that I have a family to cater with so that they can come together if they are like two, or three, or four, they can come together and say, well, today we have to eat this or [Mary] like... the [Organization A], one thing I like about their volunteers they always come together. Today we will eat this. We like it. But previously it wasn't like that. A volunteer would tell you I eat boiled egg, I will eat fried egg, I will not eat this, I will eat this, I will eat that. [...] So, all that I can say is they have to accept us the way we are and just think about us too. Because not all home that you go and you feel at home. [...] I'm always there for the volunteers. If... they are going to be here 'til the rest of my life and the rest of their life I will be there for them. But one thing I can say is I always want them to accept us the way we are. We are black. They are white. They have to love us as human beings. Because some people, when they come, it's like you want to be... and it's like you are different, but we are the same. When you cut, there's one blood. There's no, the blood is not written 'this is white blood', and 'this is black blood'. No. We want to be nice to them, so we expect them nice to us too. So that we will live as a family.

The cultural differences identified by the participants in many cases appeared focused upon the food and other easily identifiable differences. But, while there were a number of differences

identified, in general the volunteers were seen positively and welcomed by the community. As Peter put it,

Well, the community, I will say they are... they are open to the volunteers. They are, they wish they come in their numbers. Yeah. They like them. Ghanaians we are, we are friendly. We like the whites.

This relates to one of the biggest complaints of the volunteers, as noted in the volunteer section, of standing out, often exacerbated by being called to as 'whites' by locals. However, the locals while generally noting positive attributes of the volunteers while talking about 'whites' occasionally described 'whites' as being 'unfriendly'. Ghanaians typically described themselves as open and friendly talking to people as they went down the streets. In contrast, the volunteers were seen to pass by people without speaking to or acknowledging them in the streets, thus suggesting that they were 'unfriendly'. As Peter put it,

...some are still unfriendly, I must be frank. [...] in this place, if you are walking along the streets you see an elderly or any person you can even give, send him a salute, just like that. Good morning, hello, how are you? They are happy. They feel like you are among them. But some would just bypass you and go. Even in a church they won't talk to the pastor. They would just come and sit down and listen to the message and then just go.

Another such description was given by Samantha. In her description though she made reference to the locals calling to the volunteers to get their attention but some of the volunteers would pass without responding, though others were friendly. The locals would call 'obrueni' to get the attention of volunteers, which means 'white person' in Twi, the local language. She felt that the volunteers should respond to all such calls and be 'friendlier'. As she put it,

You know they are different from our bloods. So maybe I haven't seen some before, or maybe somebody haven't seen a white woman before, or a white man before, so when you meet a person outside and she calls you brunei or white woman at least you have to respond to that person. So that there should be a change for some people.

This speaks to the cultural differences, as someone raised in western society, where differentiating people by different coloured skin is often referred to as discrimination, may see the locals calling the volunteers by 'obrueni', or 'white person' negatively, as they may feel it is a derogatory term. This seems to have caused some difficulties between the groups, as the locals may see it as nothing more than an innocent descriptor as they do not realise that such a thing could be taken negatively by people from other cultures. Alternately, those from other cultures may not recognize that such references may simply be innocent comments and may need to be made aware of this difference.

Additionally, because of the novelty of 'white' people, the volunteers often had a lot of people clamouring for their attention, though the locals may not realize to the extent that it may happen. This novelty factor, combined with trying to adjust to a different climate and culture may

reduce the enthusiasm of the volunteers in responding to every call of 'obrueni'. Volunteers should be made aware of this beforehand and realize that they have an impact on the community simply by entering into the area.

There are different stereotypes that some of the local participants noted with regards to the volunteers. These stereotypes are discussed further in the next section.

5.2.2.3 Confronting Stereotypes

In the future plans noted by the locals, which will be discussed further in the paper, there were occasional comments that alluded to the 'whites' being able to solve the problems of the Ghanaian people. This is one of the biggest potential stereotypes that I was presented with in the interviews that I conducted with the locals. For the most part, this idea was most commonly put forward by participants who had more limited contact with the volunteers, and these participants tended to come from the group of community members. Some suggestions appeared to be based upon the image of 'whites' whom, they assumed, would distribute money to many different causes and/or people without having to worry. As Peter says regarding the people in the community,

Blacks expect whites... that they are charitable, they are people who give free. So, there was a time when the white is going [...] [the children] are saying give me something small, give me either a coin or something. They will be shouting. They will be following. [...] expecting that whites will give.

As noted in an earlier section, Walter, Ernest and Albert all mentioned concerns about street children and suggested that volunteers should build an orphanage and school, one even going so far as to suggest that I do this personally. Even some who recognized that not all volunteers were wealthy still wanted the volunteers to give to all of the children. Peter, while recognizing that

You know Ghanaians, or blacks in general, we see whites are... as charitable people, people who give alms. People who give. So when whites come and they are not giving much or well... sometimes the expectation is too high.

But then went on to say,

I wish when the volunteers are coming they can try and do some fundraisings or get some sort of income, big money so that they can donate at least a bus and write their name from Canada volunteers on a van or even a taxi, a car, would be okay. And then their name would be there doing some good. Their name would be there, they are doing this dormitory. Their name would be there, hey, that is all that at times we expect the volunteers to do.

The way in which he said this made it sound as though he thought that this was something simple for the volunteers to undertake. This indicates an element of the community's expectations of the volunteers in terms of financial contributions.

As a volunteer I found these discussions to be very challenging. In reference to the above comment, while this section is focused upon the perspective of the locals, I would like to interject a

point from the perspective of the volunteer at this time. I have personally done a number of volunteer tourism trips and taken part in an even greater number of fundraisers for myself and others going on such trips. In such fundraisers the amount of money raised was often small in comparison to the costs of the trips and plus essential supplies to bring to such communities. As a result, the idea of one person raising enough money for a car appeared borne of a stereotype that likely needs to be addressed by the volunteer organizations or by the volunteers themselves to foster a better understanding and more realistic expectations. After further discussion and explaining my own situation in reference to finances Peter amended his comment, explaining,

Well, the community is still thinking about how the, well... the charitable thing I was saying previously. Blacks expect whites... that they are charitable, they are people who give free. [...] But, like I was saying, we don't know that you are students, you don't work. Sometimes you are here just for tourism or volunteer work. But the fact that you are white among the black they think you have [resources/money] [...] that is the problem.

With that he suggested that perhaps the volunteers talk more with the children and instead of giving them each candies or money, as they may ask for, tell them about planes and things that they may not know about. Additionally, he felt that a donation of something as simple as a soccer ball to a school may reduce the call from the children for other things. As he put it, *“That would, that would ease the burden of ‘give me money’, ‘give me this’, ‘give me this’, ‘give me this’.”* This is an area that does need further study and should be addressed as it not only impacts the volunteers, but could be important to help locals to recognize that they may be able to achieve some of the things that they are suggesting for volunteers to do themselves if they make the effort. It also builds into the idea of expectations and ways in which they can be built or changed to be more realistic for both the volunteers and locals through discussion between the groups.

One additional stereotype appeared to be a result of the nature of the volunteer work in the community. It also appeared that there is a stereotype that all ‘white people’ like children, as it was noted by several participants. While the stereotype is not true, it is likely borne from the fact that almost all of the volunteers that they have had in the community have been volunteering in the orphanage. As Albert told me,

I know they like childrens. So if I see them working at the [orphanage] nothing worries, because the white like children. Yes. And they have some pity for the people. Like African peoples, you always think about them because they don't even go. Like you live in Canada? Yeah, in Canada everything is well organized for you. But if you came here, some hardship there. You work hard before you get morning, so if your parents not succeed you suffer before you gain. Some get it easy, but for me I'm struggling to get it.

This stereotype appears to not have as direct impacts as others, and thus is not discussed further, but I felt worth mentioning. However, this comment also alludes to a larger stereotype that some of the

local people may feel that the volunteers may not have experienced hardships and may have very few challenges with resources, if any. This, again, relates to the idea noted above that ‘whites’ may be able to do many things that the locals cannot and likely needs to be addressed.

As a result of some of these cultural differences, particularly those relating to stereotypes, misinterpretation, and awareness, or lack thereof, of specific cultural differences, one can see there is room for improvement in the experiences of all groups. In some ways how people react to cultural differences like these can be compounded by issues in communication. Alternately, such challenges may be alleviated through communication. As it is an important topic communication in volunteer tourism is further explored in the next section.

5.3 Communication, Connections and Contact

A major theme that emerged from the data analysis was communication and connection. As noted earlier, expectations are built on what information is available (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). As such communication can be seen to have a lot to do with developing expectations, whether through one-on-one means, as through individualized communications like phone or email, or with a broader audience, as provided through websites or pamphlets, as all forms may provide pertinent information for such development.

My research revealed that communication can also act to fulfill expectations in some cases, as continued communication can be one of the expectations that an individual can hold. As the discussion below makes clear, in this case, communication often played a role in both the development and fulfillment of expectations. It was seen that initial communication can help in developing expectations. Later communication that would fulfil expectations of the participants during or after the experience could also be seen to influence satisfaction levels. Additionally, reference to connections to others in the form of relationships appeared frequently. These comments most often were made while discussing communications between individuals from different groups. As such, there will be some discussion of communications with regards to relationships within this section.

This theme is comprised of a number of sub-sections, which are broken down similarly to earlier sections in volunteers and Ghanaians. The first discussion relates to communication from the perspective of the volunteer, found in the next section.

5.3.1 Developing Expectations with Missing or (Mis)Information

Communication played an important role in shaping experience of the volunteer from the beginning of their experience and will likely continue even beyond the experience. At every step, communication occurs between the volunteers and members of the other stakeholder groups. As

alluded to in *Section 5.2*, challenges in regards to communication can make volunteers uncomfortable or even upset, as shown by the statements by Anna and Stacey. Alternately, it can help in terms of developing trust, as seen in a statement by Anna shown in the stages discussion. Again, she said “*I went with that organization because the person I was corresponding with was able to give me information about who I’d be working with here, the other organizations that they are affiliated with so I, I kinda trusted them.*” This is just one example of how communication can affect the development of expectations. It can also play a much larger role.

In the case of the volunteers interviewed for this study all mentioned some experience with errors in communication that had an impact on their expectations being met. Occasionally miscommunications resulted in a sense of dissatisfaction and/or negative impression on the organizations or people encountered. For example, Stacey and Leanne experienced unexpected communication challenges in the marketplace, which they saw quite negatively. Also Stacey expected more honest and open communication with her coordinator. She described a situation that she encountered in this way,

[The project manager] came by I think three times or something, and it was just, it was not easy talking to her in a very open way because all of the family members were around us. [...] [S]he was asking pretty much three questions. Like, how are you? What’s your favourite food? And, yeah, how’s work? And we [...] didn’t have any other chance but to say yeah, fine and everything’s okay. Because [of] everything... It was just so rushed and yeah [...] since I wanted to change the project I also know [...] they seem to have difficulties with me, or with changes, or unexpected thing, so even though that, that first week I thought was great, [...] I got a different impression of the organization over the time now.

She implied that this issue could have been solved by the organizer talking to her privately rather than asking in front of others. Given the context, she appeared to have felt some social pressure to say that everything was alright even if it was not. In this situation she did not feel that her coordinator was actually interested in what she had to say and this reflected poorly on the organization. And, while she did report enjoying some aspects of the trip, such interactions left her unhappy with the service provided by her organization.

Anna arrived to find her host family situation was different from what she had been led to expect and the gift suggestions for the orphanage that she was told were inaccurate. When asked about how much information she would have preferred in that situation she said:

The more the better. The family that... the information I got... I’m living in this little sort of compound and there’s a landlady and there’s other people that live in the compound apartments and those were the people that I got the information about, but I have had almost no contact with those people. The people that have been looking after me are another family that have been doing my cooking and the kids have been showing me around and they’ve been great but I had no idea that these people even

existed before I got here. So, that would've been good to know, like who it was I was supposed to be going to.

As noted in the section on building expectations, both Danielle and Theresa's programs were different than what they both had thought they were going to be based upon the information provided to them early in their selection process. Danielle also had difficulties with her placement and this led her to wonder if the people in charge of her organization knew what was happening in some placement locations:

Well, what I would like to see is that I think [Organization E], or at least the person that I've been emailing with is not, uh, she doesn't know what is happening in Ghana, or at least with the project. So, I think that what they need to do is, is tell that, if you are in the orphanage you will... you will be teaching. Or you have to be in the orphanage if the children come back from school. So that's what they need to tell. And I think that they need to know [...] that some things are not as good [as they may believe]. I have been talking to the Ghana organization, of course, about the problems that I'm having with the orphanage. But it doesn't mean that they will actually tell [Organization E] about this problem. So, I think when I come back to Holland I will be emailing my contact person of [Organization E] to tell her about my problems.

As seen in the discussion on volunteer orientation, orientation was viewed positively in terms of helping to address some of these issues. In this way, orientation can be a much appreciated form of communication between the volunteer and the organization, but participants suggested that more may be necessary. As Theresa said, *"I think maybe a little bit more orientation. To try and help with the whole culture shock aspect. And maybe just a little bit more communication or clarification beforehand so it's, well, not so surprising all of a sudden, might be good."* And at another point she said, *"[J]ust clarification on, kind of what's going to happen and when kind of thing. A little more communication. That would be good."* Generally most people thought orientation was a valuable resource for newcomers and that this is a key component of effective communication.

Generally, the volunteers seemed to indicate a need for more communication between all groups, because miscommunication can cause issues between all parties involved in the experience. Anna suggested some small changes, such as keeping coordinators up to date and such as she thought that, *"If the information getting to the volunteers was a bit more current and accurate [t]hat might be helpful. That's a small thing in the, in the grand scheme of things, but it's, you know, probably worth doing."* As the previous discussions have shown, this was not an uncommon statement. The volunteer tourist participants also described elements of communication which appeared unique to Ghanaian culture. Some of these, such as the phrase 'you are invited' by people eating was appreciated by the volunteers, as Danielle said, *"[W]hat I really like about their culture is the 'you are invited' phrase when they have a plate of food. And then I am like 'okay. This is really... the way people live here and I like that'."* While other things in the communication seemed strange and perhaps off-putting for

some volunteers. Theresa talked about her experience with phone conversations while in Ghana, saying:

When people call you, well in the U.S. it's 'oh hi, how's it going?' and you ask how each other are and then you slowly get to the point of what you called to talk about and then you reply and at least say 'bye' and say 'Okay. See you tomorrow.' or 'talk to you later' or, you know, end the conversation, whereas here you just... you pick up the phone and it's kind of, it's oftentimes a three word conversation. 'I am here' hang up. And it just... it really shocked me. I was like 'okay' okay and they hung up on me 'alright'. But, you know, you got used to that and that was... that's normal here. That was probably the number one thing that was just different and yeah.

Finally, in terms of keeping in contact with those met/befriended in Ghana, Anna and Theresa both indicated that they thought that they would keep in touch with people, while others did not speak directly about this idea. This speaks a little to the concept of communication and the expectation for continued contact that appears in the accounts of the different Ghanaian groups, which are discussed further in the next section.

Also, relating back to the guilt discussion earlier, Anna added that she would likely be more cautious and aware of the potential negative of such contact, saying:

I know I will stay in touch with people here, some of them. I'll be better prepared for some of the negative, negatives of that. Last year when I went home I started getting requests for things from people I [...] had 'friended' on Facebook and it took me a while to figure out how to deal with that. I didn't want to [...] unfriend people or, you know, reject them, but at the same time didn't necessarily want to... well, I couldn't... give them the things they were asking for. So, I mean, that's a good thing to be prepared for. And not... not think badly of people for asking because they don't... I mean, there're good reasons they don't understand that [asking] might not be a good thing.

This alludes to the concept of guilt and cultural differences noted earlier, but in combination with trying to continue a friendship/relationship though continuing communication with people from the experience. And, while true that it may not be particularly comfortable for the volunteer most did appear to adjust and/or accept such behaviours, though they would have preferred it not to happen at all.

As has been made clear in this section, the biggest stress in terms of communication from the perspective of the volunteer was lack of accurate information. Thus, the volunteers suggested that there should be more communication between all parties involved in the experience. From hosts, to organization, to community, to volunteers, awareness is one of the biggest factors that would help improve the experience for the volunteers, if not all of the stakeholders. With that in mind we move on to the perspective of community members in regards to their perspectives on communication.

5.3.2 Communications of the Hosts: Commonalities from the Ghanaian Perspectives

Within the general theme of communication there were a number of differences that were made apparent between the three host stakeholder groups. As such they will generally be discussed in a group by group manner, but first a general reflection on the notion of responsibility and accountability/transparency of the organizations will be presented as it was a concern/concept that appeared across all three groups in conjunction with issues of communication.

5.3.2.1 Responsibility and Accountability/Transparency

In this section, I discuss a variety of concerns regarding responsibility, accountability and transparency from the perspective of the Ghanaian groups, both in regards to caring for the volunteers and in terms of the distribution of resources. This issue falls under the theme of communications as many of the ideas expressed by participants relate to issues of information and how/whether it was relayed between groups.

These ideas were discussed in different ways among the groups and related generally to the amount of information available to them. As such, in this section, the concerns of host family members regarding responsibility, and concerns of community members with respect to accountability and/or transparency of the organizations are discussed. Finally, the organization members' views of responsibility, as well as accountability and transparency are recounted, as they complete the picture and answer some of the questions raised by the other Ghanaian groups.

In terms of the host families, contact with the organization was seen as important, but in many cases not ideal. This led to questions of what to do in emergencies and times when contact was unable to be made with the coordinator. These issues ultimately relate to notions of responsibility. This appeared particularly important to Robert and Mary as their organization's coordinator was in another part of the country and occasionally difficult to contact, even by phone. As a result, Robert and Mary wanted to be more responsible for the volunteers and be supported in doing so by the organization. As Robert said,

We love, we love, you know, hosting volunteers, but in addition to that I think there are some specific, you know, areas that we can, you know, help, apart from, you know, being host families. So I think if it's possible and we can be giving, you know, different roles, you know, to play apart from hosting I think it would be good and it would go a long way in helping the organization and the volunteers stay. For example, if you look at [the village], for example, [Organization A] does not have a coordinator, a representative, whatever in this area, so if they want to do something they will just have to follow us, you know, just to do those things for them. And specifically, that is not part, you know, of our job, but we've added, you know, some of those things. So I think if those roles, you know, are added, [...] to our area, I think it

would go a long way in helping. [...] Yes, if not every, you know, location but specifically, let's say, um, the Ashanti region if listed they have one coordinator for Ashanti region. And that person is responsible, you know, for everything about the volunteers in Ashanti region. I think it would be better.

Mary also noted that it seemed to her that the volunteers felt it necessary for their coordinator to approve things, including outings with the volunteers, prior to doing them. That appeared to make things more difficult for the host families, as they were generally expected to be engaging the volunteers in cultural activities and volunteers continuously trying to check-in with their coordinators concerned them. This could have been a result of some question of trust that could be off-set by the organization's coordinators and other staff in initial communications with the volunteer. As Mary put it,

And then I've said, they handing the volunteers when they are in [the village], so that they also believe in us. And also, we need the organization to work with us as a team. Not just you be somewhere and I will bring you volunteers and that is it.

Wanting to be considered part of 'the team' of the organization and ensuring volunteers knew this was a main issue noted by hosts with regards to responsibility for the volunteers and/or the volunteer tourism experience. This relates back to the expectations that the host family is supposed to provide much of the cultural experience for the volunteers and, when the volunteer feels that they need to check-in with their coordinator before every activity, the host may feel like they cannot fulfill that expectation, a concept suggested by both Mary and Robert. In regards to the responsibility, transparency and accountability the next perspective explored will be that of the community members.

Peter voiced a concern of the transparency/accountability of the orphanage. In this case he was referring to the expectation that donations to the orphanage would be used for what they were intended when given. He noted a concern that in Accra there had been an orphanage where there were problems with donations and such not going to the intended recipients. He did not believe this to be the case in his community, as he felt that the children at the orphanage were getting what people had been donating, but felt it necessary to raise the concern. So, for the community to perhaps feel more comfortable with their donations, it might be beneficial for the people at the orphanage to communicate more clearly with the community.

Unlike the other local groups, participants affiliated with the organization and orphanage provided a number of comments regarding responsibility and accountability in regards to both the orphanage and the volunteers. In terms of responsibility responses varied. Flint suggested that the volunteers were essentially to be considered responsible for themselves, but also that the director of the orphanage was responsible within the orphanage and keeping track of the numbers of volunteers through the orphanage. Shawn also appeared to say that the volunteers are responsible for

themselves, but that it would be good for them to get to know the various stakeholders in and around the orphanage. Rose noted that the responsibility for ensuring that the volunteers were doing what they were supposed to while at the orphanage was up to the leader of the shift in terms of permanent staff. As she further explained,

We operate like hospital, those who come in the night there are, there is always a leader for each team. At the moment there is a leader working with the rest of the workers and the volunteers. They are supposed to train the volunteers how to do the feeding, how to bath them, you know, how to dress them, the other way around, because here you do something... like how we put on the babies napkins is a little bit different from how you do it back home. And some volunteers are very happy to see this. Putting on babies' napkin that way. And they will tell you they are willing to learn how to put it on.

These different views shown relate to the idea that in different situations there may be some complementary or, alternately, conflicting expectations in play, even within the organization, which may cause conflicting messages to be conveyed to volunteers and staff causing some confusion. Additionally the above quote also contrasts another statement that the volunteers may be unwilling to learn, but perhaps emphasizes the importance of stressing the cultural differences in some situations. This could be useful for the organization to be aware of as the volunteers may want to learn a different way of doing things, or more specifically the Ghanaian way, but may not see how feeding a baby could be different enough in Ghana to be bothered to learn unless otherwise told. This could relate to the expectations of the volunteers to engage in new or authentic cultural experiences that are different from those that they may have in their home environment.

In terms of transparency and accountability at the orphanage, both Rose and Flint made note of reports that were required to be submitted to the various parties investing in the orphanage. These directly relate to the expectations of donors that resources go to where they were intended, as was suggested to be a concern by Peter. Such information available included different reports the church, the social welfare office in the government, as well as various organizations requiring such materials for continued funding. In addition, the organizations often had volunteers coming in who could gain information directly regarding the use of donated resources. Flint also noted that in addition to the official reports to the aforementioned organizations, that,

The orphanage, they have reports, so there are volunteers who come in here, so, like, they can follow-up to see whether there have been the changes that the volunteers are expecting. There have been an improvement as to what they, volunteers, are expecting. Or they can also continue to help in the linkages between the volunteer and the home.

He also noted there were some reports and/or updates that were available to the public if they wanted to see them.

Also, Flint mentioned some organizations would also send specific volunteers with the donations to ensure that the plans for the money are implemented just as the organization wished. As he described it,

Some also came with, with a particular financial resource and then whilst they're in they ensure that those things that they can use that money for are implemented before they leave. But the organization per se, I've told you [that] our main sponsors, get us some volunteers, they for themselves are financing the home already, but those volunteers sometimes will come in, and once they come in, like [Amanda], you came to meet [Amanda], she's here because, she was here because of [the sponsors] and once she's here, any kind of resources she carried with her before coming, she ensured that those things, those resources, are used for the very purpose, purpose for which she collected the monies. So those are some of the ways that we get financial support from the volunteers.

This may have been a solution for overseas organizations to make certain that their donations were going for what they intended rather than being used on items that were less critical or being misappropriated as is a concern in some situations.

Finally, individuals from the community who donated items or money would occasionally stop by the orphanage to see how things were going and give suggestions if they felt it necessary. As Flint put it,

People who pop in to donate. People pop in to visit. People pop in to familiarize themselves. So each time they come in, they come in and they tell us why they are in and sometimes when they are about to leave we allow them to also record whatever they came to work with so that , or through that kind of communication they also communicate to us what is wrong, what is right and other things.

As Flint describes this situation, one gets the sense that the public is welcome to come in to find out what is going on and how things are going. This offers some sense that the orphanage is making the attempt to fulfill the expectations of the groups donating to their cause. This is likely to be taken positively by those in the community and abroad who are trying to help as they have some way of determining if their expectations are being met. The organizations appeared open in their communications and willing to provide information when asked.

In the next three sections, I discuss additional issues of communication expressed by specific Ghanaian groups. These sections move from the perspective of community members, to organization members, and, finally, the host family discussing unique communication concerns, meaning those that did not apply to all three groups uniformly.

5.3.3 Looking for Information: Communication for Community Members

The four community members interviewed had not had much exposure to the tourism volunteers. Even though two participants worked at a restaurant that was frequented by a number of volunteers and the others interviewed were religious leaders, only Peter had spoken with any volunteers in much

depth. All four gentlemen welcomed an opportunity to speak openly with me, both as a researcher and also as a volunteer. As Ernest, one of the restaurant employees, said, *“I have been hearing that some NGOs have been coming to help. Like, I’ve not seen them personally. You... even you will come, you will see them, they are from [orphanage], they came to [orphanage] to help. I may not know what they came to do,”* and later said that he often did not have to opportunity to talk to them *“one-on-one”* as in our interview. As most often did not have the chance they took the opportunity to ask me some questions about what I did as a volunteer at the orphanage. Albert, the other restaurant employee, said that he had asked others what they were doing there before but they usually simply responded saying that they were working at the orphanage and left it at that, but that he wanted to know more. In his words:

If any white I met if I ask them a question and they say I am working at the [orphanage]. I don’t know the kind of work they do there, but anytime they come in town... town, yeah... like Canadian, Switzerland, USA, Holland and other part of Europe, they came, but I don’t know the actual work they do there. If you ask them they say I am working at the [orphanage]. So, what are you doing there?

I answered the question very similarly to the volunteers, providing information like that presented in the placement description in Chapter 4. This illustrates a gap in communication between the community and those that are there to help them, and not only the volunteers, but also the organizations, even the orphanage, and others in the community. As Beau, one of the government workers aptly put it,

You know, there are... most of the residents of the community are not aware of such programs. But when it comes to the other institutions, like the municipal assembly, the educational unit... all of them are aware of such things, but ordinary citizens, ordinary residents of this community are not aware of such activities.

Also, as identified in the section regarding cultural differences, in the existing communication between volunteers and the community, some of the volunteers are perceived by community members as unfriendly. As Peter put it,

[T]here are some who are... who come and then they are not friendly at all. They are not friendly at all. I don’t know why. Why? It looks as if when they come they think they... they have some wrong perceptions or they are being... put in their mind some... something about the blacks or what. I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know but some... those who come, some of them are very, very good. Recently a lady came, I think there were two, they came from England. Oh, they were very, very friendly. [...] But some will come... will come here and say hello, how are you? And, you know, they will just nod their head and then off. So they should be friendly. Yeah they should. They should go extra mile.

In some cases this image of ‘unfriendliness’ causes the community members to shy away from asking the questions that they may want to ask. Ernest mentions something similar to this, saying:

[T]he organization, they are plenty, they are plenty came, so after a lot, a lot of the thing they came to do or all the plan they have for them, maybe it's up to them, so I cannot go and ask them what the organization is coming to do. But all I saw is... I see some whites and came there all in town, so I don't know the actual thing they have to do, or all the plans they have for them, so if they have anything you don't see them. I cannot tell you.

In some ways the challenges in communication between the volunteer and the community may be solved by something as simple as a greeting, or sharing candy with some children. As Peter suggested:

Like, ordinary greetings. And then sharing some... you can even gather the children in the community, within a second you can gather about hundred of them and give them a word. [...] And those who come on Christmas too they can also use that, especially the Christians among them, can take that opportunity and witness to the children and they will bless them with toffees or few biscuits. They will be okay. They will be very, very happy. They will be very, very happy. And that will give room for other people who will be coming and as for the volunteers they are so wonderful... they are wonderful.

This may be a temporary solution to make volunteers seem 'friendlier' or more approachable, but it would appear the root of the issue lies deeper below the surface than such a solution. The answer to this may be a greater amount of communication between the volunteers, organizations, leaders, and general population, but this needs further study to be properly determined. With this in mind the next section talks about the issue of communication from the perspective of the organization.

5.3.4 Building Connections: Communications from the Organization

In this section, I discuss issues of communication as described by participants involved with the organizations associated with the orphanage. As the organization works with and, to some degree, connects all of the stakeholder groups, communication can be important. And as much as communication between this group and all of the other groups is important, it is also important within organizations and their staff, which also discussed in this section.

As mentioned in the last section, while the organization may know why the volunteers are there, members of the community may not have such knowledge. Those affiliated with the orphanage brought this to my attention as they are also members of the broader community and wanted to express their concerns about this issue. Barry put it this way,

[N]ot all the community members know why these volunteers are here. [...] [W]hat I believe is that sometimes when these volunteers come they should call on the traditional relays so that they will educate the mass of the people on the needs of these volunteers incoming here. So when they see you around they can feel free to communicate with you. [...] The elder people there should know your main reason for coming here so that they will address it to the majority of the population so that when you meet them they know your communication and your purpose here would be of good use. [...] So if these people are communicated [to] through their chiefs or their

assembly-man or whoever is the head of that community it will help you to go a long way to promote and [...] it would go a long way to help these volunteers who normally travel to this town.

This appeared to be the main concern in terms of communication with the broader community from participants within the organizational group. With this and other similar comments the onus appeared to be placed on the volunteers to solve the issue rather than the organization(s).

Informing the volunteers about other aspects of their experience in advance of their placement was identified as being important. In addition, letting the volunteers know that things may be done differently in Ghana were discussed by the Ghanaian participants. As Franklin said:

At every point in time you have to talk to them to know what is the problem, because some volunteers do not understand what baby is or how to take care of babies here in Ghana. And some volunteers do not even know how the Ghanaian system is in regards to [how] [the orphanage] people take care of their children. So at the boarding time we have to talk to them to know the problems and expectations. What volunteers did not like so that when you are giving volunteers orientation you can bring it to them and tell them that this and this is the Ghanaian style this is what the Ghanaians do in terms of taking care of the babies. So the volunteers can know, especially with terms of baby gifts to [give] [the orphanage]. Some volunteers may say that use it for this and they won't understand. But when you talk to the administration at [the orphanage] they can tell you that this is what we use it for. [...] [T]he volunteers don't know what donations or other things go on, what is their plan, what is their structure here.

The final point raised in reference to communications between the organization and the volunteers was that continuing contact with the volunteers (beyond the time of the volunteer's stay) was seen as a very positive idea by the organization members. The idea of a network of people who had volunteered in the area was suggested by several of the individuals interviewed in this group. And when asked more about it all of them expressed an eagerness for such a resource. Flint put it most simply, "*so we can continue to communicate with our volunteers.*" Rose happily reported some continuing communications with past volunteers and hoped for that to continue and for more of the volunteers to maintain contact in the future. When talking about this she cited two volunteers in particular who had come to the orphanage to help initially but then remained in contact after they returned home. One sent positive information back to her friends, family, and religious group and they gave the orphanage a donation. While the donation was welcome it appeared that even more important to Rose was the communication of a positive message about the home and the encouragement of others to engage in the program. As she said, "*Our concern is: I wish each and every volunteer would send a message across back home to go and tell his or her people back home to come and support the program.*" The volunteer that she spoke of earlier was also to re-visit again soon with some friends, but had helped the orphanage in different ways since her trip. Also, simply

friendly contact, in the form of Christmas cards and/or letters, appeared to be enough for Rose, with those received being viewed quite positively.

With regards to communications within the organizational structure itself, not many expectations were identified by most of the participants from that group. However, Flint did have two points relating to the volunteer organizations that send volunteers to the orphanage. The first point related to helping with the facilitation of the host family and volunteer connections. In his words,

[W]hat I will expect them to do is that, while they organize the volunteers to brief them as to the life in Ghana, they also must learn to organize the host families. To brief them as to how to relate to those who are coming. They may be doing that, but it's very important how to relate to them. They are like... some of them they know of they will leave into the night, smoke or drink. But once you come to the host family, the host family may be a Christian who may be that core [...], the conservative Christian who may not expect some of those things. So how do we balance that? How do we balance that so the host family and the, the volunteer can relate? And then ensure that a relationship develop[s]. There, from that day 'til... for that relationship.

The second point Flint brought to my attention was the variability in volunteer numbers, saying that it could be very helpful for those at the orphanage to know in advance when they would have low or high volunteer numbers. He saw this as a way to help the home work better, as they could plan permanent staff schedules to accommodate the volunteer numbers. This would ensure higher numbers of permanent staff were available at times when there are not to be many volunteers or lower numbers for shifts when the volunteers were there in full force so that shifts primarily unattended by volunteers could have more staff.

The ideas brought forward in this section were the main concerns in regards to issues of communication noted by those within the organizational group. Continuing along the lines of communications, the next section discusses communication concerns from the point-of-view of the host family.

5.3.5 Communication of the Heart: The Perspective of the Host Family

As noted earlier, the host family is one of the main groups that have contact with the volunteers. To some degree they can be considered to be the face of not only the organization, but also the community. Thus it is important to consider what people from this group have to say in regards to communications as well as how they see their own role. It is also important to note that, when speaking about communications, participants often spoke about the importance of relationships between individuals from different stakeholder groups, particularly the relationship between the volunteer and their host family. This section discusses main concepts with regards to host families and communication moving from general concepts to a discussion of the desired

communications/relationships with volunteers in *Continuing Contact*, and then, finally, *The Host-Organization Relationship*.

As noted earlier, communication is also necessary between the organizations and the host families. The host family is often essentially the face of the organization with which the volunteer comes into contact. As a result, it is important that both the host family and the organization know what the other is doing and/or has planned. Organization members recognized this to varying degrees. Flint pointed out the importance of openness between all parties, particularly with the host family, and in terms of informing them about the volunteers, saying:

Most volunteers may come into a home, a host family, but most of the things they will [not] know. [...] The person may eat the food, yes, [but,] as to what ingredients [are] in the food, [...] what those ingredients do to the body, why we sing the kind of song, why we do put on this colour at this time or whatever, about how we relate as a unit. All those things that are done with the host families may [be] difficult [...] to explain to the volunteer, most probably because the... as to what the volunteer is coming to learn or why the volunteer is in may not be explained to the host family. [...] What I am asking for is an openness. 'Why are you here with me?' Let me know so that the person can easily sit you down so that you can learn by observation, yes, but you can also learn by inquiring directly for positive result, answers to be given.

Also, Franklin notes the need for 'strategies' for working with volunteers and host families. This concept of 'strategies', as he put it, relates to gathering feedback from both volunteers and the host families in order to learn from the successes and challenges or failures of the past and work to improve in the future. As he said,

Because in every host family stay you cannot have [things] 100% perfect. [...] Some of those families may do things that a volunteer may not like and volunteers may also do things that host families do not like. So you need to get a feedback from both sides, so that you can know what to develop your strategies for.

This comment shows an understanding of the importance of gaining feedback from all groups involved in the facilitation of volunteer tourism experiences.

The host family participants all noted that they were appreciative of the volunteers staying with them. Myles even went so far as to call it a 'privilege' to be a host. All of the host family members that I talked to appreciated the dialogue between themselves and the volunteers and what they had learned. As a result each planned to continue their involvement. For Myles hosting volunteers was important. He referred to the experience of hosting in this way,

It is nice to host them, [...] taking people in the community, it's good; it's like, a privilege to do that. [...] Yes, it's a privilege to me. To have a foreign person living with you, you are also going to learn from the person. To know how, uh, they also live, so that at least one day when you find yourself somewhere around those place you'll not be too much of a stranger.

Even so, the arrangement was not perfect, small issues were described, some fuelled by cultural differences and a lack of communication. For example, Myles mentioned that the volunteer he had hosted stopped helping around the house after a couple of months, which he did not like, and also wanted to go out more than he approved of, as he said that he was concerned for her safety. Monica noted that the volunteer she had hosted seemed to expect Monica to do everything for her including paying for her taxi into town even though Monica was not given any financial assistance by her organization to host the volunteer. Mary and Robert spoke of many experiences with volunteers and for the most part acknowledged that the volunteers were human, as were they, and that no person is perfect. Samantha was new to hosting and did not say much, but did express some concern regarding the wastefulness of the volunteers she had hosted. These were all minor concerns, but appeared related to communication, or lack thereof, namely with regards to communications between the volunteers and/or organization. This, in turn, was seen to affect the process of expectation development as the expectations formed were not accurate.

5.3.5.1 Continuing Contact

There was one main concern relating to the communication between members of the host family and the volunteers, which Myles, Monica, Mary, and Robert all mentioned: they all wished for continued contact with the volunteers after their departure. In many of these cases the volunteers were adopted into the host family for anywhere from a couple of weeks to six or more months. When asked if she had any concerns at all about the volunteers coming Monica said:

The only thing that I would like to talk about is that when the volunteer comes and [then] they are gone. I think the link should continue. The volunteer should continue to link with their host family, at least to find out if they are doing well. But there is nothing like that. They come. They leave and it's like that is the end of it. That is not fine.

All four of those noting this concern (Myles, Monica, Mary and Robert) had lost contact with one or more volunteers that they had hosted for approximately six months or more shortly after the volunteer left. Thus they expressed concern, and even distress, that these volunteers, whom they believed had been so integrated into their families, would simply leave without ever talking to them again. It is particularly problematic given the cultural differences that exist, as Ghanaians may see community differently than the volunteer. As Mary said,

[W]hen you host a Ghanaian for even a day she or he will always remember you. Always want to get in contact with you. Because that's our culture. That the person who give[s] you a cup of water today is your saviour. So we always want them to remember that one day, someday you were in Ghana [...] in [our] home, but we were not like strangers. But for some volunteers, when they go they go. When they are here they are here. That one, it's really sad because when they are here we try our best for them to feel at home. So we always want them to remember us. Just hello, how are

you? [...] We have to keep in contact so that what you have [built in] two or one month will not collapse.

While she was concerned that some volunteers did not stay in touch, she also happily noted some volunteers remained in contact, particularly mentioning one volunteer who had come back to visit and to help the family by giving them clothing and things like that when she saw that they could use assistance. Mary did wish that more of the volunteers would stay in contact though.

This issue may need further consideration and education for the volunteers and others going to take any part in such an experience. Many volunteers may see it as a one-off experience, but the volunteer may have more impact than simply on the place where they are helping. This means being aware of the fact that they also have an effect on the people that they interact with outside of their placement.

There was also occasionally a concern shown by the volunteers that people may ask for things, which may cause them to hesitate when communicating with their host family and others they met while in Ghana, as was noted by Anna earlier. One of the hosts, Robert, did want to address that issue, saying,

[T]hat is one thing sometimes it worries us, you know, a bit. Because you stay with the volunteers and they become [...] some kind of a family. You exchange addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and stuff, but [...] something with all these is that when they leave you will not hear from them again. Yes. And this very afternoon I was on the internet, on Facebook specifically, and I saw two of the previous volunteers online, so I decided to chat with them. So I sent, you know, a chat message and they never responded. They never responded. And sometimes you call some of them and they will never even pick [up] the call. When they see that it's, you know, that it's from Ghana. [...] [T]hat is one thing that, you know, it worries us a lot. A bit, I wouldn't say a lot, but a bit. So we want to, you know, stay in touch with the volunteers, yeah. Because nobody knows when is it the next time that you may want to travel to Ghana. [...] Nobody knows. Maybe one day, um, I will travel and let's say come to Canada or America or elsewhere and then I meet you. You know. The, the communication, the friendship, you know, has to continue, so we... it is, it is our desire, you know, it is our desire to stay in touch with the volunteers, but when they leave it's totally different then altogether. [...] [I]t's not that we want to stay in touch with them just to demand from them, no. To some people and to some Africans that is the case, when they want to stay in touch with you it's a different thing, but to us it's not like that. We just want to, you know, keep in touch. You know, with the volunteers. And anything that we have to share, if there is any information, any knowledge whatever, we can freely share it. Yeah. So, we want to let them know that they should stay in touch with us. We are not going to place any demands on them. Yeah. So, they shouldn't fear.

This shows that some of the people are aware of the cultural differences and that the perceptions of the volunteers as resources are not shared by all. It simply notes that while it may be a concern for the volunteer, some of the hosts simply want to keep in contact because they may care for the volunteer and be concerned for their well being. This also speaks to the potential need for a

different approach in this type of tourism to encourage and/or facilitate continuing contact with those met by the volunteer tourist. And, also, the need to address the issue of how to continue communication with people met on such experiences, including ideas on how to navigate communications in which people ask for money or items. Unfortunately, some good host families may be disappointed by such an experience and may not be as inclined to host again. Myles suggested this result, saying this about volunteers who stop contact,

You stay with somebody for a whole period and then you call the person once and then you never call again. [...] So that one don't make people [want] to host them. [...] It's not that we want something from you, but just to maintain the relationship.

This again speaks to the wish to continue contact as well as some of the reason why the hosts feel it may end.

5.3.5.2 The Host-Organization Relationship

Although continued contact appeared as a main concern when it came to communication between the host family and the volunteers from the perspective of the host family, the communication between them, as the host, and the organization appeared to have additional challenges. These concerns included: the accuracy of information given to host families; the opportunity to give feedback, and identifying the needs that they had of the organization.

The main concern was in regard to having more financial assistance to help host the volunteers better. Of the host family members interviewed, all mentioned some concern about the need for money and/or more money from the organizations to off-set the expense of hosting volunteers. The organization working with Myles and Monica would have families host for anywhere from three months to a year and would provide no financial assistance to the families, while the organization working with the other three provided some financial assistance. Samantha had looked into this in the past and told me,

This organization, especially the [Organization A], the man told me they give some small money for the host family. But I asked of another organization, that was [Organization B], [...] they told me they will come for three months, six months, one year [...] They want a family person, like a person who have a husband, children so that when the person, the volunteer, come we take care of him as your son or your daughter. You feed her or him, give the person accommodation. [...] So, you will not be given anything, so when the person is going, or when the person is gone and they, he or she wants to appreciate of what you did it's up to you and the volunteer.

Similar to Samantha's account, Myles told me that when he was a host for Organization B he was told that he was to take the volunteer into his family like his own child. This meant to take care of the person in terms of food and shelter as would be expected, but the organization provided no financial assistance to off-set any of his costs. Similarly, Monica explained,

You see now feeding is something as it involving money so even if you're feeding sometimes you have to go out to get the [supplies] and those things. And it's like because they were told the host is to pick up for them everything, they want the host to do it. That is putting extra burden on the host. I think something must be done about this. If that could continue then I would think that the organizer should at least give a token. Not much. A token.

This may also show some discord between what the organization may tell volunteers and what they tell host families. It also shows some of the potential gaps with which expectations might be inaccurate as some information may be missing or incorrect, which largely relates to a break-down in communication. The volunteer may not know what the arrangement is between their organization and their host and expect it to be different than it is in reality. Myles also described how financially taxing this situation could be, particularly considering the volunteer may not be able or willing to eat the same thing as the family and could therefore cost even more than a typical family member. The organization working with Mary, Robert and Samantha did provide financial assistance to cover some of the food costs of the volunteers, but the amount may not reflect the actual cost of the food. Mary explained it this way,

[T]he pay that they give to us, it's really... yeah... they need to do some more because the economy now is changing everything. And, how can we feed them with just a small pay? And the pay is to just feed them. Not a pay that they are going to pay you. Just for you to take care of the volunteers. So I think they need to add more, just a little, so that, uh, we will be happy, the volunteers will be happy when they are eating.

This and similar situations to those noted above with Organization B may leave the volunteer to fill a gap that they may not even realize exists. This is because the amount received by the host family may not be as high as the volunteer may expect it to be, particularly considering the sometimes high cost of program enrolment that they may have paid to the organization for such an experience. To provide an example, I went with a relatively inexpensive program but, after talking with my host family, determined that they got a quite small amount of that money compared to what I would have expected. This is particularly the case considering that a good portion of my experience there revolved around the hospitality that they provided. As a result I gave an unanticipated additional supplement to them as a thank you at the end of my stay, as others have in the past. Mary and Robert both talked about volunteers who had given them money and other items at the end of their stay because they felt it need to be done. This is an issue that may need to be resolved between the host families and the organizations with which they work. But, first, the information has to go through to the organization, which appears to be something of an issue for the hosts. Also, such information regarding potential supplements by the volunteer may be better accepted if expressed directly to the volunteer beforehand so that they too can plan accordingly.

In general, the transfer of more accurate information between the host families and the organizations would be beneficial, not only to the host families, but to the volunteers and the organizations. Mary and Robert, who had the most exposure to volunteers and volunteer organizations, both wished for the organizations to be more open, getting more feedback from them. They had a number of suggestions to improve the services provided by the organizations in that area and were just waiting for an organization to really start listening. As Robert said,

We believe that the host family has, you know, a lot of stake and a lot of contributions that they can, you know, offer. Because it's the host family who lives with the volunteers and they will be the best, know, people to tell, you know, what the experiences are and what the volunteers want and what they don't. So I think that opportunity should be given to the host family.

This shows that while the hosts may feel that the organization has a general sense what is happening with the volunteers, the host families may be able to provide even more accurate information as they spend a good deal more time with the volunteers. Also, Mary described current communication with the organization and the volunteers as well as the potential of open communication in the following way:

For the organization all that I can say is now we are working with them. So, they, they have to treat us as their workers. Because [...] the host family will just be somewhere and you will be somewhere and when you have a volunteer, maybe say I'm bringing you a volunteer, we have to have communication. You have to call me. I have to call you. I have to see what things are going so that I know, I will know that I will be there for them. Not just I'm their host family but I have to be away... from them... when they have volunteers I have to bring it... I want our work to be like a genuine work, because I love hosting volunteers and it's a work that I appreciate doing it. I really love working with the volunteers. So, if they will just [...] [talk]... like we will be friends. We will know what we are doing. And the volunteers too will be happy when they come.

It must be noted that the organizations may vary a good deal in terms of how much communication takes place between them and their host families. This was brought to my attention by Robert, who had experience hosting for two organizations. About this he said,

I would say with [Organization A] we are in good contact with them now. But the organization we used to work for previously, we did not have any contact with even the main person in charge. And I remember one time, he came here, he wanted to come here and look around... where the volunteers are working and stuff. He happened to be here in the house and didn't bother to ask the host family what their challenges are, what is it that they want to improve, what [it is] that they want. [...] He didn't ask anything.

This also shows another concern in regards to communication, as he indicated that an important person in their previous organization visited but that the person was not seen to have any interest in the ideas or concerns of the host family, focusing only on the volunteers. This could be important because, as was noted above, the host families are often seen as the face of the organization to the

volunteers. If these hosts are unhappy with the organization this may be expressed and leave the volunteers in an awkward/ uncomfortable position. Additionally, it may leave the volunteers with a bad impression of the organization, even if the coordinator is trying to focus upon their needs. Finally, one need only look back at some of the literature to remember that word-of-mouth promotion is important in this niche (Lyons & Wearing, 2008), leading to potential negative effects on the organization for the future.

In the end, the host families typically just wanted more open communication between all parties in order to make things better not only for themselves, but also for the volunteers, and, as a result, the organizations in which they were involved.

5.3.6 Summary of Communications

There were a variety of communications concepts addressed in this section. For the volunteers the main concern was to ensure that they received enough information and that the information was accurate, additionally suggesting that communications related to both building and meeting expectations. Access to information and ensuring accurate information were also important to the local groups. Participants from each of the local groups also mentioned that they wanted to keep in contact with volunteers after the volunteers returned to their homes after the trip. Moreover, with the local groups there were additional specific concepts or stresses noted. For the organization building better connections between the groups was important. Alternately host families emphasized continuing communications between the host and volunteer beyond the volunteer's stay. The community members often simply wanted more contact with the volunteers. The next section addresses some of the recommendations/solutions to challenges offered by the participants.

5.4 Looking Forward – Recommendations from Participants

In this section, I present some of the recommendations/suggestions that were put forward by the volunteers and the different organizations from the different stakeholder groups. These generally relate to unmet expectations, as they were offering suggestions to improve the volunteer tourism in the area. There were a few suggestions made by the volunteers, which are addressed in *Section 5.4.1*, but the brunt of recommendations and future planning discussion was with the participants within the Ghanaian group and these are presented in *Section 5.4.2*.

5.4.1 Suggestions from the Volunteers

When asked if there were any changes that the volunteer felt might be necessary, most volunteers talked about communication and this was dealt with in depth in the section previous. For volunteers the main point was that communication is important in their experience. With this they suggested that

the organizations should ensure that enough accurate information is given to the volunteers (in a timely manner) as this can help them to both build realistic expectations and, later, also help in meeting their expectations. However, there was also one further suggestion made by the volunteers regarding staffing and/or training at the orphanage.

Leanne and Stacey both recommended that the orphanage may need to initiate a few changes, suggesting that some form of formal training and/or preparation be put into place, not only for the volunteers but also for some of the staff. This issue arose as there were occasionally issues between the volunteers and staff regarding how something should be done. This might have had an impact on the number of volunteer's concerns and may help the volunteers and staff to work better together. Stacey also felt that the children may benefit from such training for both volunteers and the staff, saying this about the orphanage

I would do a lot of things different [...]. Especially the, the free time the kids have. It's not okay that they spend so much time in their cribs, in their beds and they, because it's, it's a really rich home and they have a lot of toys and a lot of stuff and they just don't use it properly. And it's just laying somewhere in some corner and... I think some of the sisters should really go through some kind of training or something. Because I... sometimes they, yeah, they don't treat, don't treat the kids right, I would say.

This was unfortunately a sentiment shared by other volunteers I met during my time at the orphanage. For some it appeared simply a matter of training in how to handle the children, but as Stacey suggested, in some cases it might simply be a result of different cultural standards and the expectations of the volunteer regarding a specific task that were built in their home culture.

These were the main areas of concern with regards to future development from the perspective of the volunteer. The next section presents a variety of recommendations for the future of volunteer tourism in the community from the perspective of the local/Ghanaian groups.

5.4.2 Insights and Recommendations from the Ghanaian groups

When speaking with Ghanaians, a number of ideas came to light in terms of what should be happening in their community in the future based upon their expectations. This was particularly regarding the actions of the volunteers and the volunteer organizations.

5.4.2.1 Hoping for More

A variety of ideas were posed when I asked participants what they thought needed to be done for their community in the future. Most suggestions related to what the volunteers should be doing in the community in addition to their current work at the orphanage. A number of locals interviewed had ideas for other volunteer placements within the community. Most noted that they could use some assistance in teaching and the medical field. As Barry explained,

I said they have been doing a great deal of work in this community. So... I am, I am always interested in the area of education because the quality of education is, is minimal. So, I would expect every volunteer or every organization that are sending in volunteers to this community should be set towards the education and the health sector. Because our health system and the quality of education are below standard, so, yeah. Cause they should bring in people with technical know-how so that they can [help the] educational system bringing new form of structured jobs to help us.

Language training appeared to be a common area as the locals wanted volunteers to help with teaching. Myles, Ernest and Monica, as well as others noted that volunteers may show more enthusiasm for the languages than locals, and thus cause the children to become more interested in learning a new language, and the volunteers may also be more knowledgeable about proper pronunciation. Myles also suggested that while teaching in schools, volunteers could help the students to learn about different subjects as well as values that are held outside of the community, using language as an example,

They can teach them certain things. Values from outside. So, even speaking English with them for them to get that language acquisition. [...] So if it is introduced to them by the volunteers who like it, it will help us. They will know how to pronounce the words well, well, and others. You see? So they can work in our schools. Not only... they like [the orphanage], but they can also come to other places and help. And I would recommend our schools.

However, additional teaching subjects were noted mostly by those associated with the orphanage through the social welfare office. For instance, Beau suggested that the volunteers teach in various fields, particularly those subjects that the volunteers have studied themselves:

[F]or the volunteers, I think they come from so many diverse areas. Some are in the field of nursing, others took recreation and leisure as you are doing, others are from the field of doing sociology then others are also social workers and all that. If they tried to organize themselves well and then come together. I think those who are into nursing would help, would go to the hospitals, the clinics here and then the health services and then try and impart some knowledge, the knowledge that they have. For them, impart it to that sector. And then those who are into social work would also do the same. I think when they do this thing it would help to exchange some kind of knowledge. There would be exchange of knowledge, technical know-how. [...] I think it would help.

This might increase the number of locals who could fill the roles that the volunteers are currently filling and reduce dependence upon volunteers. Outside of the area of teaching there were various recommendations for things that volunteers might help with. Myles suggested that the volunteers could help the community in various ways as there are “a lot of needs” of people in the community.

Beau, Barry and Flint noted concerns for the aging population. I heard that the elderly were not well taken care of and/or people did not know how to adequately care for that age group, as local health care providers and others working with the elderly in the community have limited experience

with this population. This appeared to be a growing problem as there are more people living to an older age than they had experienced before. Beau and Barry in their work at the social welfare office were possibly more aware of this problem than others. As Beau put the situation,

[A]ctually we found out that in the rural areas most of the problem, the challenges that elderly face... sometimes they are not well catered for. They don't have good clothes. They don't have good food to eat. So you can, it would be difficult for them to live. So we try and find some funds elsewhere, sponsors from elsewhere and then provide for them so that they... they have a good, a better life. And there is another thing that we are also doing. With those, the elderly, in hospitals and other clinics, we provide them with the pampers.

This suggests that while they are trying to help those elderly who need assistance they may not have the resources necessary to make a big difference. This leads them to look to outside donors, such as the volunteers, to help supplement such programs. As a result they suggested that to get some assistance from volunteers with that group would be good, particularly as many volunteers come from developed nations, which generally have older/aging populations and may be more knowledgeable about the elderly. Additionally, assistance by people experienced in dealing with the elderly in setting up resource centers and more institutional settings for the elderly needing additional care was suggested.

Through the interview process as a number of the community members, particularly Walter, Ernest and Albert, also expressed a wish for the volunteers to set up facilities for street children. In particular, they emphasized the need for an orphanage for older children and a school specifically for those children. Further, they appeared to place the responsibility for such development upon the volunteers coming to the region. As Walter put this need,

I want to lay emphasis on the orphanage home and the school for [street children]. Yes. Yeah that would be my most desire. Because in the community the children are the future of the community... they are the future of the community and we... a time will come, yeah we will die and the children will come and replace us. So if the children are not well educated, they are not well educated, the future of this community is doomed. The future of this community is doomed. So, we, we, we want to educate the children in this community, especially those who are, who are broken, from broken homes, who are on the streets selling, they are to have an orphanage with a school purposely for, for such a people. Yes. Such a people. And I hope... I am hoping that you will do... that you can deliver, that we can educate them. Yeah, we can educate them.

They wished for such facilities to get children off the streets and deter them from criminal activity, thus both helping the community to become safer and helping those children. However, it appeared that there may be a need for some of the community members to communicate with their local government agencies to perhaps suggest such developments, as the governmental workers that I spoke with did not note any issues regarding street children in our discussions.

Finally, the last suggestion was put forward by Peter, Beau and Barry in different ways and was about developing a central meeting place where all of the volunteers in the area would go to sign in and which all volunteers could use as a base of activities. There locals would be able to approach a secretary or someone at the facility to ask questions and volunteers could sign in and out so that their whereabouts were known. There they felt the volunteers could establish a network and then that network could be used to update the volunteers about what was happening in the area, including projects and needs of the community after they had returned home. As Beau put it,

I believe the volunteers, as they've been coming, come in way trying to set-up a center for themselves. Not necessarily building, a house, a complex, like that no. But they can set-up a center where each and every volunteer coming in can report and then do registration. And then try to organize themselves in that particular area. So when, at long last, they finish their activity and they are going they can still... because I know some of them are coming from elsewhere, in Scandinavian countries, Europe, America, Asia... so it can create a kind of network among themselves. So if they create some sort of center here it can help them in that way. Then also, for the community too they can do... [...] If they think of anything that is needed in that particular community they can come together, no matter where they are, whether in Norway, in Canada, they can organize themselves because they have that networking. They can organize themselves and then come to it to that community.

This combines a few different ideas expressed by participants, mainly that the volunteers be able to check-in to the area and see if there is something to be done for which they are qualified to help, but also so that an international network may be developed for the future benefit of the community. This would allow those who volunteered there to remain in contact with people in the village. This relates to the issue of continuing contact/connections, as noted in *Section 5.3*. Peter posed the idea this way,

If they can get accommodation and office where they can, we can go there and make inquiries and... that would be even more better than moving here and there. Sometimes your coming... you don't have... we don't have office here so it's [Mary] and some few friends who receive them. But if we have got a proper office, like in town we have volunteers, we have so... and so 9 o'clock office secretary is there so that all your movements can be monitored. Sister is in [the orphanage] right now, sister/brother so and so is at here, sister is going to Cape Coast today or... yeah. That would be even [better] than [what] is going on now.

In Peter's idea the main difference from Beau's initial idea is the addition of enabling the community to approach someone at the 'volunteer center' to ask for assistance. Additionally this added another element as the volunteers are tracked to some degree while in Ghana.

In the end there were many suggestions for future development but participants seemed to be looking for help wherever possible. Peter summed this up well, saying,

[T]he problem will be [...] the aged. [...] [T]hey will expect something but, those who can afford to help them with clothings, but if they can't... well, a talk on what you are studying now can also help some of them community members. Like, AIDs and then tuberculosis, those who are in the medical field, they can help them. Even dieting,

what to eat and what not to eat and then some, some, sometimes they also want to hear what is happening in the... Europe, America, Canada, they want stories from that place too. And another time too they want to hear how planes are taking off, what happens in a plane, how does it touch-down, and those things that... the ice, the snow, how... here we don't have those things. We don't see them. So they want to hear something about how the snow falls. We want teachers to see how... so, with that it would also help the aged and then the children too like it. They will pay attention to you when you are giving such lectures. And then in the higher institutions like the midwifery and the training colleges, oh, they would be happy to hear those things.

In some cases a source of dialogue between people of different cultures was all that was needed or wanted though others put forth a call for help in other ways, such as financial assistance. I found that some ideas relating to areas in which the volunteers could help were perhaps somewhat based on cultural stereotypes, as discussed in *Section 5.2*, while others were not explained in enough depth to truly address, mainly because of language constraints. In the end such ideas may need further study to get the full picture and, in some cases, ensure feasibility. However, there were a couple of additional concepts/recommendations noted by different Ghanaian participants which were in planning stages. The difference of these from the ones noted above being that these also involved plans that appeared likely to be implemented relatively soon. These plans are discussed in Chapter Seven, *Pending Plans*. The next section summarizes some of the topics covered in this chapter.

5.5 Summary of Results

It is worth noting, although perhaps unsurprisingly, that the data provided by the volunteers varied a great deal from the other stakeholder groups. The data from the interviews with community members, organization members and members of host families were similar in many cases, though differences were presented, particularly in reference to communication. Very few themes were completely universal, manifesting themselves in the same way in each group. However, some main themes appeared in all of the groups represented.

The first major theme was stages. Stages are experienced in some form by all parties. Three stages were identified in this study for the volunteer. These were: planning/anticipation; their volunteer experience in Ghana; and reminiscing/remembering. In the case of the Ghanaian group, stages were not as much dependent on their own involvement but instead corresponded to the volunteer, more specifically the time before the volunteer entered the picture, time when the volunteer was present and then time after the volunteer. Moving through the stages showed some of the process of building expectations and, subsequently, the expectations being met or unmet and affecting the satisfaction of the participant.

Both systems appear cyclical in nature, though the cycle for the volunteer simply starts with their next trip planning process, while the local groups appeared to undergo constant cycling because

new volunteers were constantly arriving as other volunteers departed. As they repeat, these cycles appeared to feed more accurate expectations for the individual as the participant will have past experience to call upon in addition to other information beyond the first cycle.

The stages had a number of sub-themes for each group with some overlap among the groups. For the volunteer the sub-themes included: pre-planning elements, meaning determining factors for choosing what experience and/or organization; building expectations and advance knowledge, preparation and planning; ideas about orientation for the volunteers; discussion of the role of the volunteer; accomplishing goals; bringing home the message; changing outlooks – impacts on the volunteer; and future plans. For the Ghanaian groups these sub-themes included: initial development; building expectations and advance knowledge, preparation and planning; ideas about orientation for the volunteers; discussion of the role of the volunteer; concern for volunteers; local involvement; and assessment elements including impacts on the organizations; and changes in the community as a result of the presence of volunteers (after numerous volunteer visitors). The latter sub-themes of each group showing elements of assessment, but in somewhat different ways.

The second major theme was cultural differences. The main point of this section was that while differences exist between the volunteers and the local people such differences can be taken positively, assuming that any inaccurate stereotypes held by any group are addressed and corrected where necessary, an idea discussed further in the next chapter. Also, if people are informed adequately so that they can form realistic expectations regarding the culture prior to experiencing such differences they are more likely to be taken positively and encourage cross-cultural understanding. This is important because, as noted earlier, positive expectations that are met often result in higher levels of satisfaction while unmet positive expectations result in lower satisfaction levels and/or outright dissatisfaction.

The third major theme discussed was communication. In communication most groups noted that there was some communication lacking. All groups generally suggested more communication and stressed the importance of openness and the accuracy of information in communications. Additionally, local groups generally wished for continuing contact with the volunteers after the departure of the volunteers, as this frequently was lost.

The last major theme discussed was the issue of recommendations made by the participants. The volunteers mainly suggested improvements to communication, as noted above. The locals suggested alternate locations in which volunteering could take place, the roles of the volunteers and the development of a system by which volunteers could be organized.

The information that has been presented in this chapter is based on analysis of the data gathered through interviews. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings in light of existing academic literature.

6.0 Discussion and Connections to the Literature

In order to locate the results of this study in the context of relevant literature, I look again at the main themes emanating from the analysis of the interviews with members of the stakeholder groups, presenting the data for the two main groups (volunteers and Ghanaian participants) in *Section 6.1* and *Section 6.2* respectively. This approach helps to shine light on the most relevant ideas and issues and lends support to related studies in our field. It may also serve to highlight new ideas and issues that need further study in order to be adequately addressed and understood. A third section, *Crossing the Gap*, discusses major ideas and issues that occur in tandem across this main division of the volunteers and Ghanaian groups and discusses the implications of these issues. Additionally, limitations of the study are addressed in *Section 6.4*, and further discussion regarding recommendations for future study can be found in *Section 6.5*.

6.1 Learning from/for the Volunteer Tourist

In this section, I discuss the main ideas expressed by volunteer tourists in connection with the existing literature. However, before moving to this analysis, I first present a few connections between the literature and this study regarding the general characteristics of volunteer tourists, in *Section 6.1.1*. I also consider how well the volunteer tourists fit into to the broader discussion of tourism and volunteering in *Section 6.1.2*. *Section 6.1.3* is dedicated to further discussion of major ideas and issues stemming from the volunteer experience.

6.1.1 Fitting the Bill

In this section, I describe the general characteristics of the volunteer tourist and compare this study to past research. With regards to the general characteristics of the volunteer, the sample in my study was similar to volunteer tourists identified in other studies. All five of the volunteer tourists in this study were of European descent and from Westernized nations. This supports the findings of Brightsmith, Stronza and Holle (2008), Brown and Morrison (2003), McGehee (2002). My sample consisted of five female volunteers, but this appeared reasonable given that McGehee (2002) noted that the majority (70%) of participants in this form of tourism were female, though this potential inconsistency is noted in the limitations of my study. In terms of age categories there are varying reports of which age groups were most prominent in this form of tourism. McGehee (2002) and Stoddart and Rogerson noted the most common age group to be between 46 and 55, with the second most common being under the age of 20, while Wearing (2001) stated that the majority of volunteer tourists were between the ages of 18-25. While my sample showed some variance in age, with three

in their late teens - early 20s, one in her mid 30s and one in her early 40s, it most closely corresponded to the age groups reported by Wearing.

Along these lines the concept of age appeared important to Anna, the older volunteer participant from this study. She felt it important for older potential volunteers to consider that they would like be surrounded by a younger cohort and keep that in mind when planning such a trip. This issue was proving to be a source of some discomfort for her and may be a consideration for other older volunteers in selecting an organization and/or program. She also suggested that organizations may want to consider it as well. She explained it this way,

I do have one, one little issue [...] and that is the age difference between me and everybody that I have been associated with here. [...] I am 43, and everybody that I have been spending time with is sort of between the ages of 15 and 22. That's the volunteers and also the host family [...] it's not 100% comfortable. It's okay, it's fine, but I would probably be having a better time if there were more people that were a bit older. [...] The first week there was a woman staying in the same place as me that was in her 30s and that really did make a difference. And I think for her too. I just think it's worthwhile for people that are not sort of undergrad age to, to think about that before they come and maybe even ask about it.

As noted before this could be a consideration worth mentioning, particularly to older volunteer tourists, as it may help to form more realistic expectations of the people they may encounter on such a trip.

Further, this issue can be connected to the literature, as one of the most popular age groups for volunteer tourism according to Wearing (2001) is from 18 to 25, which loosely falls into the younger group mentioned by Anna. However, there are also contradictory results from McGehee (2002) and Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) who reported the main age group for participation in volunteer tourism to be from late 40s to mid 50s in age, and suggested a growing number of older adults taking part in volunteer tourism endeavours, although still showing high numbers in the younger cohorts. This appears to be an area in need of further study as it may be a concern for the different cohorts. Additionally, it may be suggested that the timing of such a trip and a potential difference dependent upon the organization and/or destination selected may have an effect on the age groups present.

Finally, with regards to the characteristics of the volunteer tourist, there is the influence of past experience. McGehee (2002) found that 70% of participants were having their first volunteer experience. This closely corresponds to the volunteers in my study, as three volunteers were on their first such experience, while the remaining two had previously participated in volunteer tourism experiences before. These details show general support for the characteristics identified in past research regarding volunteer tourists.

There appear to be no such common characteristics identified in the literature with regards to those in host communities participating in such activities. This likely due to the different cultural mores found in the various locations in which volunteer tourism occurs. The next section moves on to discuss the volunteer tourist and where they fit in the broader scope of tourism/tourists.

6.1.2 Where does the Volunteer Tourist Fit?

It is important to consider where volunteer tourists from this study fit in the realm of tourists in general, as well as to discuss the variance within the group of ‘volunteer tourists’. I start with a discussion of Cohen’s (1972) categories of tourists and the suggestion that volunteer tourists fall into the ‘drifter’ or ‘explorer’ group, as discussed in the literature review, but then move on to consider a spectrum or continuum of volunteer tourists.

First, in regards to the idea of volunteer tourists being ‘drifter’ or ‘explorer’ type tourists based upon Cohen’s (1972) work as suggested by Wearing (2001), I would suggest that some of this group may fall into those categories. But, as volunteer tourism can be seen to be changing and becoming more popular (Sin, 2010), some of these tourists may also now fall under the grouping of ‘individual mass tourist’ based upon Cohen’s categories of tourists. I suggest this because it appeared some participants depended almost entirely upon the volunteer organization to set up their accommodations and in-country experiences. This appeared to remove some of the independence typically seen in the ‘drifter’ or ‘explorer’ categories. However, some volunteer tourists were more independent. For example, Danielle, who planned for only the first part of her experience through the organization, or Leanne, in noting that when engaging in such an experience again she would not go through an organization. This suggests that there are varying degrees of independence/dependence sought within volunteer tourism, although those I spoke with erred on the side of caution by using an organization for part of their planning.

Such differences in the dependence/independence of the volunteer tourists would suggest more of a spectrum rather than fitting the volunteer tourist into one of the four categories noted above, though the spectrum would also encompass Cohen’s categories. Such a spectrum could range from a volunteer selecting the ‘safer’ path, wherein everything is planned by the organization, to much more independent planning by the volunteer. The volunteers choosing the ‘safer’ path would likely fall closer to Cohen’s individual mass tourist group, while the other side of the spectrum would be more in line with the drifter or explorer categories, with the activities, destinations and timelines within the country chosen by the volunteer.

Most volunteers in this study appeared to want some degree of ‘safety’ through a connection to a volunteer organization, though the amount of planning by the organization desired by the

individual varied. This would likely place these participants somewhere between the divide between the more independent groups and the individual mass tourist-types. Due to the limited sample in this study, these concepts cannot be applied to a broader group but do suggest that there may be more ways of approaching these categorizations. This is an area that needs further study with a larger sample, but was worth noting, particularly in consideration of the changes in popularity of this form of tourism as noted by Sin (2010), as it is becoming a more commonly accepted form of tourism.

This idea of a spectrum appears to parallel the concept of a continuum of volunteer tourists as posed by Brown and Lehto (2005), Coghlan (2008) and Weiler and Ritchins (1995), though they were referring to a continuum in relation to 'shallow' or 'deep' involvement in volunteer tourism. I would suggest that this concept of 'shallow' or 'deep' tourism may also relate to additional factors.

First, the duration of the trip in which the volunteer engages may reflect some of the motivations of the volunteer tourist. For example, there are some volunteers who go for a short trip of one or two weeks while others may participate for six months or even up to one year. I would suggest that these varied durations may require different degrees of dedication and may also reflect different motivations. In this study the participants varied in the duration of their trips, from one to six month(s) in duration. With this sample it did appear that those staying for a longer duration may have been more altruistically motivated than those staying for a shorter time. Unfortunately, given the limited sample size of this study this link could be coincidental and so would require further study.

And, second, the amount of time the volunteer spends traveling within the destination for non-volunteer purposes may be seen as an indicator of such a continuum. I suggest this as different volunteers may spend more or less time volunteering than traveling to see touristic hotspots depending on their motivations. This would support the ideas that volunteer tourism may need to be looked at in a more scalar model as suggested by Brown and Lehto (2005), Coghlan (2008) and Weiler and Ritchins (1995), with volunteering on one end and tourism on the other. This may be helpful in contextualizing some volunteer responses, particularly with regards to motivations of altruism versus travel, as some volunteer tourists may be more focused on the volunteering aspect, while others see it more as an opportunity for a unique tourism experience as suggested by Sin (2009). This concept, of using the non-tourism activities as an indicator is, in part, based upon feedback from the local groups, as some made queries regarding the non-volunteering activities that volunteers do while in the country. They particularly focused on why volunteers travel to more tourism focused locations on weekends and such which caused me to consider this element.

This could also be seen to relate to how the participant perceives their time and selects what additional activities to engage in while on their trip. The next section describes some of the main points of the experience and expectations of the volunteers in connection with the literature.

6.1.3 Volunteering Abroad

The process of building expectations through planning, going through the experience, the outcomes of the experience and building further expectations is one that appears cyclical in nature. The sharing of positive stories by those who have engaged in volunteer tourism, as suggested by those interviewed for this study, is likely to encourage some new participants to engage in the future. And the expectations of those new participants may start to form based upon those accounts. In Chapter Five the suggestion of perhaps overly-positive accounts after the experience in comparison to stories told on-site during the actual experience was brought to light. In that discussion, I went through the process of the volunteer explaining different elements of planning and preparation, followed by going and engaging in the experience, and alluding to a final stage in reminiscing about the experience, with some accounts being based upon what was expected to happen, as well as both current and past experiences. This concept of the stages for the volunteer are re-visited in light of the literature in *Section 6.1.3.1*. This is followed, in *Section 6.1.3.2*, by a general discussion of the additional themes made apparent through the volunteer accounts.

6.1.3.1 Volunteering Through the Stages

In this section, I identify and discuss some of the existing volunteer tourism literature with links to concepts from this study presented in *Section 5.1* regarding the stages of the experience from the perspective of the volunteer. As previously noted, the different stages are similar to what has been identified in other forms of tourism and/or leisure experiences, such as Clawson and Ketch's (1966) phases of the experience. Their phases included planning and/or anticipation, travel to the destination, the experience at the destination, travel from/returning home, and reminiscing. I considered using these pre-determined categories in classifying the different stages, but only the volunteer group would have likely felt the experience in the specific way defined by these groups. Additionally, the volunteers in my sample also did not refer much to their actual travel to the site from their home. They appeared more focused on the planning elements prior to the trip and the experience on site than the transport to the site, possibly because of the short duration of the travel compared to the duration of the other phases. This does show that, while not the same as Clawson and Ketch's model, there was a time element that was similar in many ways across the groups. As a result I created broader/more encompassing titles for the progression of time through the volunteer tourism experience for all stakeholder groups.

Planning

In terms of the first stage, planning, there is much in the literature relating to volunteer tourists in terms of motivations, decision-making, marketing and other such concepts. As noted in the previous chapter, the volunteers first made a decision to travel and to volunteer in Ghana. Motivations would have come into play in the decision-making process as they would select the option that they would expect to best fulfill those needs/wants. As in any tourism pursuit the travellers in volunteer tourism pursuits may sacrifice some of the basic needs of the person as outlined by Maslow (1966) in his hierarchy, as discussed in the literature review, but are still concerned with safety (see also Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006). Similar to the safety focus shared by adventure tourists in preparing for an adventure experience reported by Weber (2001), the volunteer tourists interviewed all noted some concern with safety. They subsequently ensured that they selected a volunteer organization that appeared to fulfill their basic needs in a variety of ways.

Some participants researched organizations to find an optimal experience and also to determine what they would potentially encounter, while others did not do as much research. Through this process, some additional expectations appeared to be developed/built. Such expectations showing up, in part, in program/organization selections based upon what they thought would have met their primary expectations. This would have been grounded in the information available to them, including that found specifically through research.

Most commonly the main motivations mentioned by the volunteer were twofold, namely, a desire to travel while also doing something good for others. Put simply, volunteering was seen as a good thing to do while seeing a culture. These findings lend support to some existing volunteer tourism literature, as altruism has been identified as a major motivator for volunteer tourists in a number of studies (Hayes, 2002; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; Sin, 2009, Wearing, 2001).

However, Sin (2009) also recently found that travel, rather than altruism, may be a main motivator for volunteer tourists, which is also supported by these findings. It is important to note that this also comes in connection to more recent efforts to look critically at this form of tourism (Guttentag, 2009; Sin 2010). Alternately it may be that there has been a change in the type of volunteer tourists when compared to those found earlier when the field may not have been as developed (Sin, 2010). This is an area that may need further study, as the findings of this study is may lend credence to the notion that as volunteer tourism is becoming more popular it may be becoming more mainstream/mass market-friendly. Such information may show a shift in the focus of the field of volunteer tourism that could change how host communities are affected. If, in fact, the intentions of the travelers in this area have changed this should be considered in future studies.

Additional motivations to volunteer in Ghana noted in this research included: to visit Africa, which appears to relate to the travel motivation noted earlier; having a more 'authentic' cultural experience; desire to test skills and/or building skills; and financial considerations. These are all concepts supported by scholarly research. Regarding authenticity, there have been many investigations into this concept in tourism. In the particular area of volunteer tourism, 'authenticity' is a topic that has been noted by many authors and has been suggested to be linked to the close contact between locals and visitors over an extended duration (see for example, Hayes, 2002; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; Wearing, 2001). This could particularly be seen in a case where the volunteer lives with a host family for up to a year, integrating themselves almost completely into the lives of the family. In my study the concept of authenticity was commonly discussed in combination with the volunteer feeling engaged with the people and culture, also supporting earlier literature. They also mentioned staying for an extended duration, which appeared longer than a typical 'mass tourist', and having more opportunities to experience the culture.

The motivation of skill building, testing one's skills and/or mastery, is well documented in volunteer tourism literature (see for example, Brightsmith, *et al.*, 2008; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Hayes, 2002; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; Sin, 2009; Wearing, 2001). In this project, skill building was mostly noted in reference to the teaching placements, though it was also noted with regards to being able to manage in a culture so different from that of the participant.

And, finally, the participants who noted some financial implications, felt that volunteer tourism is relatively inexpensive compared to other forms of tourism for trips of similar duration. This idea is suggested by Sin (2009) as a motive of convenience, as the trips may prove more inexpensive, they provide access to areas not typically open to tourists, and come with a variety of grants, bursaries, and/or subsidies generally available for this type of travel.

During and After the Experience

As the volunteers were still on their trips when interviewed they often expressed thoughts of their experience both in terms of the time of the interview and projected/anticipated feelings regarding their time after the completion of their trip. As such the main themes in the time during the experience and after the experience showed some overlaps in the material and, thus, will be presented together in this section.

Accomplishing goals was also one of the ideas discussed in the interviews. While in Ghana some participants said they had done what they had expected to do while others had not accomplished as much as they had hoped. The positive reports in this case came from those whom had either volunteered previously or were volunteering in a teaching role. Anna had a slightly different way of

putting her expectations in terms of what she would achieve. She saw volunteer projects as more of an opportunity to “raise awareness”. This is supported by the findings of Wearing (2001) in terms of volunteer tourism being focused more on “facilitation and improvement between hosts and guests” (p.26) than direct assistance in a physical task.

As noted in the literature review, a number of authors that say participants in volunteer tourism pursuits are affected in a personal sense by their experience (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). This is reflected in different ways, such as their behaviour, work, and way of seeing or perceiving the world post- travel (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). This is consistent with the information provided by volunteers in this study, as all five volunteers noted that their viewpoints had changed or that they could see them changing when they returned to their home environments. In the study, the amount of change that was anticipated and/or had been experienced after past volunteer trips varied. The main differences between participants appeared in terms of long-term versus short-term changes to behaviours, work and reasoning or thinking about cultural difference. There were some ideas participants expected to wear away over a short time and appeared more superficial. For example, changing the amount of water they used upon their return home or simply appreciating that resource more than they had in the past. But they also noted longer-term changes. The majority of these long-term predictions focused on changes to reasoning, particularly in terms of cultural understanding and being open to new or different things, as well as generally appreciating the opportunities they had more. This has not been expressed in other studies and may be something to look at in the future using a longitudinal approach to determine lasting effects on the volunteer tourist.

6.1.3.2 Recognizing Challenges

Some participants found that the communication they received from their organization was inaccurate in some regards. The general consensus seemed to be that perhaps information was not being relayed between the different organizations working together as well as it could have been. As an example, I was registered through a volunteer organization that had agreed to my research and volunteering. They did not relay any of that information to the orphanage where I was volunteering and planning to do this research, which created some interesting challenges upon my arrival. Anna was told of gifts that she could bring to the orphanage, but upon arrival realized that the things she was told were not the most necessary. As she put it,

They don't need toys at the orphanage, they need things like diapers and formula and bottles. So I [...] collected some unnecessary items. I don't think it's that big a deal, but it a little bit unfortunate I guess.

This may not have been a large problem in this case, but when someone is coming into a foreign culture it would be helpful to provide them with accurate information. Anna appeared disappointed that she had not brought more helpful items. In connection with the literature, as discussed earlier in terms of building expectations, when one uses inaccurate information to form expectations the expectations may be unrealistic and, thus, more unlikely to be met. Such issues may cause one's expectations to go unfulfilled and, as such, result in some dissatisfaction with the experience as noted by Oliver (1997). Also, in this case it is unfortunate not only because the volunteer may be disappointed, but also because the recipients of the gifts may suffer as they may not get what is most needed.

Further, ensuring that the volunteers know what additional costs may occur and giving a break-down of where their money is going may be beneficial. This would, again, help to build realistic expectations, and in this case allot an accurate amount of money in their budget to these things. This may not only help the volunteer, but also others involved as some volunteers may feel more or less inclined to help them financially based upon such information. Also, planning based on those expectations may allow funds to be more evenly dispersed across groups, particularly when it comes to host families as that appeared as a group of potential concern.

6.2 The Ghanaian Perspective

Analysis of the interviews with members of the Ghanaian groups elicited a number of themes. Most of the ideas appeared similarly across all three of the stakeholder groups that comprised the larger Ghanaian group. As such, these will mainly be discussed as one large group, with one area of discussion with regards to the host families found in *Section 6.2.3*.

6.2.1 How the Locals (Ghanaians) See the Role of Visiting Volunteers

In volunteer tourism and volunteering in general there is concern regarding the variation in the number and quality of volunteers at a project at any given time (Caudron, 1994; Holmes & Smith, 2009; Mesch, Tschirhart, Perry & Lee, 1998). In these studies the focus was on high turnover rates in general volunteering ventures as well as the limited experience and/or training some of the volunteers may have.

In volunteer tourism this could be particularly important as there are not only ebbs and flows in volunteering numbers, but also variations in destination choice, based upon a plethora of external and internal factors. Also, there may not be training or screening processes for the volunteers so the volunteers may not be as helpful, or may even do damage in some cases. For example, a child may be unintentionally hurt because a volunteer did not know how to handle children properly.

This is notably an area of concern for those involved in the organizations with which the volunteers work. In this study, the staff of the organizations raised a few points related to these issues. They pointed out that, while the varying numbers were of some concern, there are permanent staff members at the orphanage at all times to fulfill the basic needs of the children. This was said to account for any times when there were low volunteer numbers. However, these participants also noted that it was more difficult for the staff and the children if there were few volunteers. As such, they wanted volunteers to continue coming and possibly even increase in number. This does appear similar to the concerns noted in the literature above, although it may also indicate that this may not be as large a factor in this situation. Participants did also wish for greater consistency and/or advance knowledge regarding the number of volunteers they could anticipate at any given time, which could come with improved communication between the various parties involved as noted in the communications section.

6.2.2 Effects on the Community

As noted in the previous chapter, the Ghanaian group identified a number of positive effects on the community based upon volunteer tourism. Some of these included economic benefits, cross-cultural understanding, and helping the children at the orphanage. These effects closely correspond with the positive benefits noted by a number of authors including: Lyons and Wearing (2008); Guttentag (2009); McGehee and Santos (2005); and Wearing (2001). There were not many negative comments by local participants in this study in terms of the effects of the volunteers on the community, or even about the volunteers themselves. This could be due to a number of factors. As I was an outsider, the individuals from the community may not have wanted to share any concerns with me. This could have been because they feared of a negative report, which could cause a decline in volunteer interest, thereby reducing the positive effects of volunteer tourism in the area. Alternatively, that they may not have noticed any negatives with regards to the volunteers. Additionally, the people interviewed may have personally benefitted through the presence of volunteer tourism and, as a result, viewed it more positively. The notion of personal benefit being correlated with more positive responses was suggested by McGehee and Andereck (2010). In their study, the more the host community members personally benefitted from volunteer tourism the more positive effects were reported.

Finally, as Guttentag (2009) notes there has been a general lack of criticism of this form of tourism in the literature, citing a general optimism about this niche. I would pose that an alternate reason is that the positive findings of older studies could be a result of similar typically positive responses to those reported in this study. This could be due to a variety of reasons, including: those being interviewed may be unaware of any negative impacts; the participants do not wish to alienate

the researcher; or, in an ideal but unlikely case, there were not any negative impacts/effects caused by volunteer tourism activity.

While there were no negative effects of volunteers in the area described by the Ghanaian participants, some cultural stereotypes did appear to play a role in the experiences and expectations of the participants. This, in general, refers to the image that visiting volunteers were thought to be better than the general Ghanaian, discussed further in *Section 6.2.2*. Additionally, there was some sense of dependency noted by the volunteers and a few of the locals through off-hand comments, which relates to Guttentag's (2009) concept of the 'promotion of dependency'.

Also, another negative effect of volunteer tourism noted by Guttentag (2009) was the possibility of reducing the paid employment available for locals. In this study, while the orphanage members noted that there were permanent staff on duty at the orphanage at all times, they did express a wish that there was some way of knowing when the volunteers would be on hand in order to plan staff accordingly. This planning may simply result in shifting workers from a day shift to night, as the volunteers most commonly were present during the day, however, through being able to plan for when high numbers of volunteers are on hand they may not have need for as many permanent staff as consistently. This may not be the case in this situation, but such ideas may have an effect on the availability of paid employment in the area, potentially resulting in fewer employment opportunities for locals as Guttentag suggested.

6.2.3 Host Family Members

Noted in the literature is the importance of guides or leaders for the volunteer tourist in terms of influencing expectations and experience (Coghlan, 2008; Geva & Goldman, 1991). I would posit that the host family is one such of these 'guides', though they have not been as widely recognized in the literature to date. This idea is based upon the data from this study regarding the expectations of various stakeholders for the host families to provide certain cultural experiences, including food, family and other aspects of Ghanaian life for the visiting volunteers. They also often appeared to be the main contacts in the community for the volunteers outside of the orphanage and/or other placements, particularly as organization co-ordinators for those I interviewed frequently appeared to live in other regions.

As noted in Chapter Five host families also noted a concern with financially being able to host the volunteers. Three of the host family members noted getting some money from their organization to help off-set the cost of the visiting volunteers, but this amount appeared low in comparison to the costs the volunteers paid to the organizations. The remaining two hosts did not receive any financial assistance from their organization and would only potentially get any money

from the volunteer him/herself. It should be noted that the volunteer tourist often pays for their experience and it would be anticipated that money would go to pay for the organizational costs, including compensation for the host family (or families) with whom the volunteer stays. This can be related to the concept of economic leakage discussed in tourism literature by authors such as Harrison (2001) and Wearing (2001). Economic leakage occurs when the money spent by the tourist either goes immediately back out of the host community, or in some cases, does not even reach the destination in the first place (Wearing, 2001). In the case of volunteer tourism, many of the volunteer organizations being used by volunteer tourists appear to be international organizations with placements all around the world. For all of the volunteers interviewed in this study their organizations were based outside of Ghana with Ghanaian co-ordinators. This may mean that the money spent by the volunteer may not actually go to the country in which the volunteer is helping. And, as a result, this money may not be used to directly help those that the volunteer intended to assist but may, in fact, go to other placements or costs. However, this may not be the case with specific organizations. This is one of the reasons why it is important for the prospective volunteer tourist to research the organizations to determine which organization to volunteer for, as suggested by Anna in her accounts.

After having discussed the differences between the volunteer and the Ghanaian groups at length it is also important to note that there are still some similarities and interplay between these seemingly opposite groups. It also should be recognized that since there are differences these may cause their own form of interactions between the groups. The next section is dedicated to reviewing some of the areas in which the groups mix, mingle or, in some cases, challenge.

6.3 Crossing the Gap – Differences in Culture, Communication & Relationships

The concepts of communication and relationships in this study often were connected to the concept of cultural differences. While not always the case numerous culturally related connections appeared between the input of local groups and that of the volunteers. This was most frequently seen in terms of contrasts and/or causality for challenges or problems.

For example, in most accounts relating to culture shock (by volunteers) and cultural contrasts (by Ghanaian participants), the problem appeared relate to the issue of not having enough information, or having inaccurate information regarding the 'other'. The 'other' is a concept relating to the contrast between cultures and, specifically, referring to the culture to which the person does not belong. This type of contrast can also be found in participant's references to 'us' and 'them', or, more frequently in this case, 'blacks' and 'whites'.

In the example above, the existing 'information' would then be the foundation upon which some expectations were built, and as a result, unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings were an outcome. Alternately, communication and relationships appeared strengthened in cases where the existing differences between cultures were recognized and respected, particularly in cases where the participant had more first-hand experience with a person (or people) from the other group. As a result it can be seen that many cultural differences could be better understood through the provision of clearer and/or more accurate information as well as increased awareness of the different perspectives.

As stated in the literature review, expectations are the anticipated results of a choice based upon the information gathered by an individual, and, as such are highly dependent upon the information available to that person (Hamer, 2006; Licata, Chakraborty, & Krishnan, 2008). This includes building some awareness/expectations of other stakeholders. Also, expectation levels vary depending upon the information gathered as well as the ways in which the individual interprets the information (Wearing, 2001). As such, incorrect or missing information is likely to prevent the individual from forming realistic expectations, and, in this case, this can cause challenges based upon cultural differences.

There is great potential for volunteer projects to assist the local people, but in order to gain the greatest good the residents must be involved and gain some sense of empowerment (Freire, 2000; Wearing, 2001). In the case of this project some of the stakeholders, mainly the volunteers and the host families, noted that there was knowledge passed both to and from the locals and the volunteers through close contact with each other. While this was the case for some, mainly volunteers and host families, some of the individuals interviewed from the community and organizations felt disconnected from the volunteers and this was most apparent in the descriptions regarding the 'other'.

This relates to one concern in volunteer tourism noted by Guttentag (2009) whereby some stakeholder groups are not very involved in the whole of the volunteer tourism experience, particularly in planning, but also in regard to the lack of dialogue throughout the process. In this case, the local community members I interviewed did not really know what the volunteers were doing in the community and did not know much about the volunteers and yet may have been affected by them in a variety of ways.

Additionally, in terms of the view of the 'other' as a fundamentally different entity, this was most powerfully seen in the simple descriptions by the locals in terms of 'blacks' and 'whites'. It was meant as a simple description, but, in combination with the content of what some community members said, the 'whites' often appeared to be viewed as some sort of saviour that could individually do much more than the person being interviewed. This needs to be addressed further as it may be forming more of a dichotomy than a true understanding or cultural exchange, this sentiment

echoing ideas noted by Simpson (2005), Raymond and Hall (2008) and Woosnam and Lee (2011). Wearing (2001) noted a similar concept in reference to potential negative impacts that could come from volunteer tourism, including power inequalities, as can be seen in the previous statements. This is likely, in part, due to the often highly imbalanced relationship between the visitor and host in tourism in developing nations (Harrison, 2001). Robert, in responding to a question of what he expected of the volunteers replied,

[F]or us as a host family we were not expecting, you know, so much from the volunteers at home. Yeah. Because we don't expect the volunteers, because that is what most people think, that when, you know, you host volunteers you are likely to get some things from them. You know, they have to invite you over to their place and other things. That is not our expectation. Yeah.

In this statement Robert brings forward important ideas, including a potential power imbalance. He noted that the volunteers are there to improve the community and to try to help in whatever capacity that they can and that is what he and his family expect. He also believed that the volunteers are doing what they set out to do. But, first and foremost, in this statement he appeared to want to clarify that his family was not looking to gain from the volunteer in terms of invitations to visit the volunteer's home or obtain physical resources. In so doing, he acknowledged that there are others who do think that way about volunteers. These concerns can also be linked back to the concept of guilt addressed earlier, as some of the locals saw the volunteers as a resource from whom they could gain something by asking for things or trying to procure an invitation to the volunteer's home country.

In general, volunteers noted different elements of the cultural differences and/or culture shock when asked about the surprises that they encountered on their trip. However, many also noted some expectation for surprises, thus not being as dissatisfied with the unexpected as other tourists might be if faced with challenges, or surprises. This idea of the expecting the unexpected appears unique to volunteer tourism. This concept is supported by the literature, as Wearing (2001) suggests that the expectations of volunteer tourists may be more malleable than those of other tourism niches. This may suggest some expectations held by the volunteers may not be as important to them as other types of tourists. But, while expecting the unexpected may have been the case with regards to some of their experiences, certain unexpected elements may have left them dissatisfied with aspects of their experience, such as insufficient and/or inaccurate information in communications.

Also, to elaborate on the concept of 'whites' being 'unfriendly' noted in Chapter Five, because of the novelty of the 'whites', the volunteers often had a lot of people clamouring for their attention. When this was added to trying to adjust to a different climate and culture it could reduce the enthusiasm of the volunteers in responding to the call of 'obrueni' ('white'). This is something that needs to be communicated to the locals, as they may start to develop negative impressions of the

volunteers without recognizing why the volunteers may be that way. Alternatively, it could also be the culture of the volunteer to not talk to every person that they pass, as they do not do that in their regular lives back home. This may need to be communicated to the Ghanaians if their current expectations are that everyone should be as friendly as they are in their community. In this the volunteer also needs to be aware of the local culture and observe/respect it as much as possible to encourage cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

Also, volunteer organizations ensuring that the volunteer knows things about the culture, like the common reference to ‘whites’, may assist in developing an understanding that they (the volunteer) may just need to be more patient and open to the other culture to help alleviate such issues. Finally, volunteers should be aware that they as a visitor are likely at least as much responsible, if not more, for the circumstance as the host, and, as such, should not take as easy offense to such references.

6.3.1 The Challenge of Continuing Contact and Relationships

As noted in *Section 5.3*, continuing contact with the volunteers beyond their time in the country was important to all of the Ghanaian stakeholders interviewed. This issue may need further consideration and education for the volunteers and others going to take any part in such an experience, as currently this does not appear to be a widely known fact. Also, most of the locals who had close contact with any volunteers expressed disappointment about previous volunteers with whom they had lost contact, mostly because they never again heard from a volunteer after that volunteer left, some of whom may have spent up to six months living or working with them and/or their families. This topic is explored further in Chapter Seven with regards to recommendations.

6.3.2 Summing Up the Connections

Based upon some of the cultural differences noted in this chapter and the previous chapter, one can see there is room for improvement in the experiences of all groups. In dealing with this there were numerous suggestions for further education and/or communication. In particular, making certain that accurate information is provided for all participants to help them to develop more realistic expectations is one of the major improvements that could be made. As was made clear in the discussion regarding the volunteer orientation, there are a variety of ways that the volunteers may be able to be given information about Ghana, particularly from the perspective of those in and around the orphanage. Encouraging dialogue between groups was also emphasized. These and other recommendations/suggestions of all of the different groups, as noted in *Section 5.4*, generally focused on improving communication between the different stakeholder groups, though the responsibility for establishing such connections tended to focus on the ‘other’ rather than the group itself being the catalyst for such change.

Also, as a result of some of the potentially negative effects of volunteer tourism described in the literature regarding miscommunications, I would suggest more involvement of local people in combination with the volunteers in efforts within the broader community. This would be in addition to the earlier suggestion of increased communication. These are similar to suggestions made by Wearing (2001) regarding creating sustainable tourism opportunities. I would also suggest that promoting volunteering by locals alongside the volunteer tourists may form a better understanding than simply seeing the volunteers from a distance. This more constructive understanding could come through both groups working together (on equal ground) if cultural understanding is what is truly desired of the experience and to reduce some of the potential imbalance noted by Harrison (2001), Sin (2009), and others. Adding local volunteers would also provide potential assistance in the orphanage when volunteer tourist numbers occasionally drop, a concern noted in a previous section. Permanent staff would still be required in any case to ensure that all responsibilities were carried through and also to continue to provide employment opportunities. While this could help it may not be feasible for many community members to spend time volunteering, particularly those caring for families. However, encouraging local youth in particular to volunteer may offer them skill building opportunities that they may not get otherwise, both in caring for small children and also practicing language skills with the international volunteers, both of which could be an asset when they reach the workforce.

Finally, as one may presume based upon the previous sections and the literature review a greater quantity of literature exists relating to the volunteer tourist when compared to the other stakeholder groups. As a result the volunteer sections may appear to dominate this chapter, and, as such, although this study does start to fill in parts of the gap in the literature regarding local stakeholder groups, I would suggest further research regarding the views of the local stakeholder groups in this form of tourism is necessary. Through this project I addressed some of the existing gaps, but there is still a great deal to learn and further gaps to fill regarding local stakeholder groups in volunteer tourism endeavours.

6.4 Limitations

In this study there were a number of limitations with which I contended. This section discusses some of these limitations. Due to the nature of this study only a limited number of participants were interviewed. Additionally, I had limited access to some groups causing the potential for certain voices to be left unheard. The issues of limitations to the research are presented in terms of each group of stakeholders.

6.4.1 Volunteer Group

In the case of the volunteers interviewed, my sample consisted solely of female participants. As no male participants were interviewed I was unable to identify and/or understand any differences in the experience from the perspective of a male volunteer. While that may be the case, my observations and discussion indicate that male volunteers were limited in number, particularly at the orphanage, where only one out of the approximately 20 volunteers I met at the orphanage was male.

Additionally, only those who spoke English and were above 18 years of age were interviewed. This may have had some impact on the range of volunteers, as those who did not speak English may have had different ideas. This is important, given the tendency for locals and other volunteers to use English as a language of default. In terms of age there were a handful of volunteers under 18 and their motivations may have been different.

Also, I only was able to conduct three interviews with volunteers at the orphanage. This may have limited the view of the placement by volunteers but could not be helped. Also, as only individual travellers were interviewed there may have been some difference in their input, as volunteers traveling in groups may have different thoughts/insights. Through my experience, I did meet additional volunteers that were not interviewed for a variety of reasons, mainly timing, health and language barriers.

Timing may also have been an issue for volunteers, as those travelling at the time that I was there may have been different than other times of the year. As McGehee (2002) noted, the most popular months for volunteer tourism were June and July, which may have affected the results of this study as it was conducted in January/February. The discrepancies in the age groupings suggested by various authors, as well as this study, may suggest that location and/or timing of studies may be a factor in the types of volunteer tourists at each destination. This is something that may need to be studied further, as there is little information available in the literature to conclusively determine if timing/season does affect the type and/or characteristics of the volunteer tourists engaging in such experiences.

6.4.2 Organization Standpoint

I faced a few challenges in this area, primarily due to the complicated organizational structure and my time constraints. First, due to the complicated structure of the organizations working together at the orphanage this may be a unique case, and as such further study at other volunteer placements may be necessary. Additionally I was only able to interview one co-ordinator/staff member from an international volunteer organization and the interview was unfortunately cut short due to time constraints, so the results may not adequately describe the point of view from that group. Further, I

could conduct only one interview with a staff member of the orphanage itself, based on language and availability, so members of that group, who likely have much interaction with the volunteers, may not have been fully represented. In the future more study needs to be done regarding the structure of volunteer organizations with more input from all aspects of that structure.

6.4.3 Community Members

In terms of the community, the limitations relate mostly to issues of access and language. I only conducted interviews with individuals from the general community who I had some contact with and that I knew could speak English adequately. This may have limited the input from this group based upon education levels in terms of language and also personality types, as I was unlikely to come into contact with those too shy or hesitant to approach foreign volunteers. Additionally, all community members with a working knowledge of English that I was in contact with were male. As a result, the community members interviewed were all male and, as such, the data may not reflect some of the views of female community members. In the future more interviews with community members in the local dialect may prove beneficial, as well as ensuring that the sample is not as dramatically gender biased, though in this case it may be related to cultural mores.

6.4.4 Host Families

In terms of the host families the main limitation was language, though the sample group was only associated with two or three of the several volunteer organizations involved with the orphanage. Other organizations may have had different communication styles as well as different styles of remuneration for the host families, so this may need further study in the future.

6.4.5 General Limitations

This section addresses general limitations in the design of this study. There are two main challenges in the design that could be considered as limitations. These are: the influence of the researcher and the approach used was not helpful in identifying themes changing over time.

In this study there are two main ways in which I, as the researcher, could have influenced the results. The first and most obvious is that my own thoughts/impressions may have worked into the study and could have played a role in the themes identified. In regards to this I tried to be aware of my own sentiments and not influence the participants based upon the questions asked. I also tried to limit emotional or spoken/vocal cues during the interviews to the best of my ability. In some cases this proved challenging, particularly when my views strongly differed from those of the person I was interviewing, but, in general, was not an issue. In the analysis I also tried to ensure that themes that I personally agreed with were, in fact, strongly supported by participant and not simply a reflection of

my views, this being particularly pertinent in discussions regarding the perspective of the volunteer. In certain cases I even reviewed responses to specific questions to ensure that the questions were not leading participant's answers. In the future studies this may be alleviated by employing multiple interviewers and/or researchers though it was not possible for this study.

Additionally, in this case the researcher was also participating as a volunteer. As a result, the participants of the study might have responded differently from what they may have to a more removed observer, thus potentially influencing the results. For example, the local people may not have wanted to offend me by saying anything negative about the volunteers as I was one myself. Also, some of the people interviewed from the local groups had limited opportunity to speak with the international volunteers and, as a result, used the interview to make inquiries of me as a volunteer. The questions asked of me usually were asking about the things that I did as a volunteer and what the experience was like for me. As some of the study questions related directly to what the participant's perceptions were of volunteers, responses on my account could have potentially influenced their answers to those questions. In such cases I generally tried to turn the question on them and have them answer before giving them a full account about what I did or what it was like for me as a volunteer. For example, when asked by a community member about what I did at the orphanage I, in turn, (before answering) asked what the person thought that I did there and thus got their answer before telling them about the actual duties that I fulfilled. In some cases this was not possible though, so an approach whereby the person was solely present as a researcher rather than a combination of a researcher and volunteer may have helped to limit such influences.

In this study I also initially aimed to identify any changes that occurred in terms of expectations over time. The effects of time on the expectations of participants were not apparent in the interview data, but may have been due to the format of the study. As a result, I could not make conclusion in this regard. This is an issue that needs further study using a more longitudinal approach/study design.

In many cases further study could be used to explore some of the issues identified as limitations in this study. The next chapter further explores areas in need of further research in the future study of volunteer tourism as well as other recommendations based upon the data.

7.0 Recommendations for Future Research and Development

There were a number of areas which I would see as benefiting from further study in different areas of volunteer tourism. Some suggestions relate to the types of placements, the challenge of continuing contact and communication, and pending plans for the community, while others are more general suggestions for the field of volunteer tourism.

7.1 Placements and their Implications

As noted by the locals, one of the areas of the largest focus for volunteers, aside from the orphanage, is in teaching. There are some challenges with how such classes are taught though that may not be considered by some of those involved. At the teaching placement the biggest challenge for the volunteer was being expected to teach a class without knowledge of what had been taught before or knowing what the students were supposed to be learning. This was compounded, in some cases, by the fact that the volunteers may not have had any training on how to teach beforehand nor knowledge that the volunteer would be leading a class, rather than simply assisting. As Theresa noted, she adjusted to these things after a short time, which was similar to my own experience in the teaching placement. Unfortunately, given that I was only there for a short time the adjustment took a good portion of my time at the school. If this is the case in other such teaching placements this could be a problem for not only other volunteers being placed in this position, but also potentially detrimental to the students trying to learn.

This is an issue for students in classes as it results in low levels of continuity in what is being taught, particularly if there is a steady stream of volunteers through a classroom on short duration trips. This could be a serious issue because volunteer placements can and do range in duration, with some volunteers only being at a placement for a week or so, as I was in my teaching position, with others potentially staying for up to a year. In the case of a year-long placement continuity would not likely be as much of an issue for the students, but more frequently the volunteers seemed to be staying for six months or less, with the average time for the volunteers that I spoke with being about two months in a given placement. That said I encountered many volunteers who were only in Ghana for two weeks, which could result in the more serious continuity issues I suggest. Unfortunately my research in this area was limited, as my focus was on the orphanage placement, so further study needs to be conducted to determine if this type of teaching situation is unique or if it is truly a cause for concern elsewhere.

Some suggestions relating to this could be simply having a local teacher conducting the classes and any volunteers assisting, as this may prove more beneficial than a volunteer coming in and simply leading without any foreknowledge. Also, if there is a shortage of local teachers or

funding for such teachers, it might help to have some sort of curriculum guidelines or resources and/or teachers' logs, for the volunteers coming in so that they can better familiarize themselves with the students' needs and maintain a more continuous line of teaching for the students. Again, this requires further study.

Based upon the data from this study it may be found that motivations may vary based upon the type of placement. In this study it appeared the motivations for the volunteers at the two placements were slightly different, which may be worth looking into in future studies. This may also speak to the differences of the volunteer tourist along a continuum, noted earlier in this chapter that may warrant further exploration.

Further, the type of placement may also, in part, determine if the volunteer feels that they have accomplished what they set out to do in their volunteer work. In this case, the volunteers in the orphanage were generally fulfilling duties that were felt to be more physical/mechanical when compared to teaching. It appeared that the duties that volunteers fulfilled at the orphanage may have been expected to make more of an obvious difference rather than what was experienced. This idea appeared as two of the volunteers from the orphanage, Stacey and Leanne, did not feel that they were making as much of a difference as they thought they would, while Theresa appeared excited that she had done what she had set out to do at her teaching placement. I would suggest that the volunteers at the orphanage may have anticipated helping more with learning activities and/or other things that would have made a more visible and/or measurable difference. However, given the language differences and age group that we were working with they may not have been able to do so in a measurable way.

While in teaching placements it is anticipated that one will be teaching, and that the children will have the capacity to understand and learn, and that such results may be immediately apparent. Additionally, teaching in many places is seen as an activity that may have deeper impacts on the lives of those with whom the volunteers are working. This is particularly relevant when compared to simply changing diapers, feeding and playing with children because of the more immediate results that can be tested and/or measured as in the case of a school setting.

One additional suggestion that could be made with relation to volunteers is that organizations try to identify the motivations and/or expectations of the participants prior to the experience, which might be done through something as simple as a short questionnaire asking what the volunteer wants to get out of the experience. This may help the organisation to better fulfill the needs of the individual, or perhaps modify the expectations of the volunteer in the case of unrealistic expectations. This might also be helpful in identifying 'shallow' versus 'deep' volunteer tourists as suggested in the literature and better plan for them. This could be positive information as the 'shallow' volunteer

tourists may be more focused upon the tourism-oriented outings rather than the volunteer work, while the 'deep' volunteer tourist may be more willing to work hard at their placement. My study suggests that this theory may be correct as some volunteers may be more inclined to treat their trip as a travel experience than others who are more volunteering focused. For example, Danielle was in the Ghana for eight weeks but only scheduled five weeks of volunteering (only adding on an additional week late in her trip) while Anna spent as much time as possible in the orphanage in the six week span that she was in Ghana.

Finally, it would also be helpful to determine if past experience may be a factor in the determination of the length of a volunteer's trip. In this case Danielle and Anna had previous volunteer experience, and went for trips that had approximately 6 weeks of volunteering, as did I. Those who had not been on past experiences in this sample had selected trips that were either a good deal longer, 6 months, or 1 month or less. Additionally, Leanne and Stacey, who were both a bit over a month into their trips at the time of the interview and were each set to be in their experience for 6 months both expressed some discontent in terms of their experience and suggested they would have liked to have revised their timelines to be a bit briefer. Stacey decided to switch projects to try something else in the country and Leanne was talking about shortening her trip entirely. This would be good to identify if it is applicable in a broader context because those with experience doing such trips may be a good indicator for what an optimal length of stay might be.

Such information may help organizations and first time volunteers, as the organization may then recommend trips of a specific/optimal duration to first time volunteer tourists to try to reduce/mitigate the dissatisfaction related to that element as experienced by Leanne and Stacey. The next section moves beyond the specific gaps noted in this section and summarizes the need for future study in the area of volunteer tourism on a larger scale.

7.2 Challenges in Communication and Continuing Contact

As suggested in earlier chapters there are a variety of challenges that can be associated with communication. This section addresses some of the issues in these connections while offering recommendations to correct or work around the challenges, first discussing miscommunications and moving on to the concept of continuing contact.

There appeared to be some miscommunication found between different groups with regards to the skills and/or training of the volunteers in this study, though this has seemingly not been identified in previous literature. In this case some of the people from the orphanage expected the volunteers to have already been taught how to work with the children by the volunteer organizations, while the volunteers did not report having such an experience, even when asked directly. This should

be addressed as it may unintentionally cause harm to those that the volunteers are trying to help if done incorrectly.

Unfortunately, in regards to continuing communication between the volunteer and hosts, while volunteers may see it as a one-off experience they may have more impact than simply on the place where they are helping, such as host families and the broader community. This means having some personal effect on the other people that they interact with outside of their placement in addition to the effects upon the volunteer themselves, in this situation as a result of such relationships being developed. However, in North American and/or even Western culture in general, we may be used to going and volunteering locally and not having to worry too much about the connections that we make in institutional settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes. This may be because the people we are there to help often change, but in a foreign culture where you are not necessarily staying on your own you interact with people outside of the orphanage or other such settings or placements. Also, building relationships may not be as emphasized in this setting as it is in Ghana, as the Ghanaian culture teaches one to build long-lasting relationships rather than short-term or convenience based acquaintanceships.

Unfortunately, this may not be considered by the volunteer and these outside connections may simply be seen as some pretty wrapping around the main bulk of focus, which is the volunteering and travel duo in the case of volunteer tourism. The volunteering in this case one may easily walk away because the volunteer simply has to go home and can no longer help in that capacity, but the 'wrapping' might simply be forgotten/discarded, even if it might be valuable in its own rite and been able to be carried with you in a lasting friendship/relationship. I personally know that I have been guilty of this myself. In the past I have spent time with on such experiences after I returned home, and after discovering this emphasis in this study, found myself wracked with guilt because I had not even considered the impact I might have made on the lives of the others with whom I stayed and/or worked.

Unfortunately, the pace of life is faster back 'home' and I, and I am sure others, often find ourselves getting caught up in this flow and forget about that 'wrapping' because it seems so distant. It can be very difficult to continue contact sometimes, but to simply walk away once your time is up may not be the best for everyone, even if it may be the most convenient for the volunteer. This is something that the volunteers should possibly be informed about before they go. This could help to make them more aware and perhaps build it into their expectations that maybe some elements of their trip may last a good deal longer than simply their time in that destination. Also, informing the host families that the cultural differences exist that may cause some of the volunteers to lose track of them after their time is done there. This may help the family when dealing with such issues as it may

reduce such expectations and, thus, soften the blow if it were to happen with the knowledge that it might not directly reflect on them but simply be one of the differences between them and the volunteers.

7.3 Development through Pending Plans

In this section the focus is on pending actions to complete the recommendations of some local participants. This section deals primarily with concerns regarding the accommodations of the volunteers from the study participants affiliated with the orphanage, though some recommendations for similar action were briefly noted by others. When discussing the volunteers in the community Peter encouraged more volunteers to come, but also said that as more came the, “[T]he only problem would be accommodation.” The challenge of accommodation was also identified by both Flint and Rose, though more from a convenience and/or safety viewpoint, and also noting it in combination with a planned solution. As Flint noted,

There’s potential to expand in the same compound. [...] There is potential to add certain income generating activities to, to [the orphanage]. So these are things, I believe, in the immediate future that can happen to [the orphanage].

Rose spoke outright of plans for building accommodations for the volunteers within the orphanage complex, as well as potentially housing for permanent staff. These appeared to be some of the income generating activities alluded to by Flint. However, she spoke of it more in terms of easing travel for the volunteers and also for the potential for volunteers to help more on different shifts because they would not have to be as concerned about traveling after dark. As she described it,

We are now planning to get a special place for volunteers, something like a hostel, where the volunteers within the [orphanage], in order for us to get some volunteers to work with us almost all the time. Because sometimes volunteers they have to travel, walk for, I mean, a distance. But if there is a place, a hostel, or a place at the [orphanage] for them to stay to make the work a little bit easier for both the volunteers and the permanent staff here.

An additional positive aspect of this plan for the orphanage was noted by Flint, as he felt that, “if possibly we can get them accommodation within the premises, and this, it’s for me, it will bring the relationship bit closer.” Alternately, this type of arrangement would result in the volunteers potentially having less exposure to the broader community. This could further negatively affect communication and understanding between groups as it appears contrary to the wishes of the community members.

One other additional future plan posed by Flint involved expanding the orphanage in terms of the number of children that they can house, though this does not appear to directly link to the volunteer tourism experience, though it may be expected that the number of volunteers requested may rise if that occurs.

7.4 Summary of the Need for Future Study in Volunteer Tourism

I recommend that we move quickly to better understand the effects of volunteer tourism on local stakeholders before too much development occurs. There have been a small number of studies that have, at least in part, explored volunteer tourism from the perspective of local stakeholders, most recently McGehee and Andereck (2009) and Sin (2010) regarding the case of the 'voluntoured' as the term has been coined. These authors, as well as Guttentag (2009), note there is still more to learn about these groups and the effects of volunteer tourism on them and that long-term studies may be necessary in this area to fully understand the long-term impacts, a point supported by my own findings. Again, this is particularly important to study because such tourist development does tend to occur in disadvantaged/ under-developed regions, and because vulnerable populations are those that most volunteers likely want to help and are likely to be affected greatly (positively and/or negatively). As noted by Harrison (2001) the effects of tourism are often more stark in developing nations than in other settings. This type of tourism also brings potential for dramatic impacts based upon the close contact and/or nature of the relationships formed between the volunteer and the local people (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001). However, while the potential for negative effects do exist there is also great potential for positive results from this form of tourism, if it is done correctly, as one can see by the optimistic views reported regarding this niche of tourism (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Guttentag (2009); McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001).

8.0 Conclusion

Volunteer tourism is a key area of tourism to study, as the areas and populations most affected by volunteer tourism are vulnerable populations. To this point, the idea of getting a broader look at volunteer tourism, taking into account the perspectives of many stakeholders, was warranted. I hoped to begin to address this gap by conducting qualitative research, which sought to identify the expectations of four key stakeholder groups in a volunteer tourism experience. The groups identified were the volunteers, people affiliated with the operation of the organizations/working for the organizations, people in the host community, and host families. Thus, through conducting interviews with people from these groups, I hoped to take an initial step towards understanding the differences and similarities of the groups. Eventually/ideally using this information to identify potential issues and, ultimately, to create an opportunity for dialogue between groups about any issues.

Before continuing I will re-iterate my research questions to help organize this final summary. The main research questions for this project were:

1. What are the expectations of the volunteer tourism experience, as held by the four different stakeholder groups?
2. How are the expectations and experiences similar or different between the groups?
3. What are the implications of these similarities or differences?
4. What suggestions may be made to mitigate negative implications?

A number of expectations were identified in Chapter Five relating to the different stakeholder groups. I generally discuss these in conjunction with similarities and/or differences between the groups. I discovered a number of differences, as well as numerous similarities, between the expectations and experiences of the four different stakeholder groups. Most commonly the three local stakeholder groups saw volunteer tourism similarly, and, as a result, I often grouped them together in discussion. Contrarily, the volunteer group often offered strong contrast even though the overarching themes/categories were similar across all groups.

Some of the main points that arose regarding expectations and experience related to cultural differences, communication, things experienced at different stages of the experience, and recommendations from the groups. The stages were generally volunteer-focused, moving from planning, initial development and anticipation, to the time when a volunteer is in the community and then elements of assessment after the volunteer has left the community. The stages also appeared cyclical in nature, for the volunteers restarting if they engaged in another experience, and for the Ghanaians restarting with a new volunteer's arrival, sometimes potentially having multiple cycles

simultaneously. The stages for each group had a number of sub-themes, with some overlapping for all, while others were more focused on one group, either the visitor or the host.

For the volunteer there were a range of sub-themes and expectation related accounts within each stage. Planning and/or pre-planning elements, meaning determining factors for choosing what experience and/or organization, in part, based upon motivations and expectations for certain safety related needs to be fulfilled were some, while building expectations and advance knowledge, preparation and planning were also identified in relation to the planning stage. Ideas about orientation for the volunteers upon arrival were noted as another way in which realistic expectations could be developed and to reduce the severity of any cultural differences/culture shock. The role of the volunteer was discussed both in regards to what was expected and experienced, identifying that these were sometimes two different things. Finally elements of assessment/reflection regarding the completion of the experience were identified, including; accomplishing goals, regarding meeting expectations to help others and/or build skills; bringing home the message, what they expected to tell others; changing outlooks – impacts on the volunteer, as all expected such an experience to change the volunteer and their outlook for the better. And, finally, future plans, whether they were going to do such an experience again and start the cycle over.

For the Ghanaian groups, main expectation and experience sub-themes within the stages included: initial development; building expectations and advance knowledge, preparation and planning, all of which were important in the formation of expectations, whether accurate or not. Moving into the time in which the volunteer was present ideas about orientation for the volunteers, discussion of the role of the volunteer, and concern for the volunteers were noted, with the participants describing their expectations regarding the challenges that the volunteer may face, such as physical elements, like volunteers having difficulties adjusting to the temperature and food, to concerns of the volunteer being a target for criminality. Finally addressing the time after the volunteer there were elements of assessment noted, including impacts on the organizations; and changes in the community as a result of the presence of volunteers. In this case changes in the community included both expected changes, which were highly optimistic, and actual changes that they have seen, which were often limited in the broader community though changes in the orphanage were readily noted.

In terms of cultural differences the main point is that while differences exist between the volunteers and the local people such differences can be taken positively, assuming that any inaccurate stereotypes held by any group are addressed and corrected where necessary, as stereotypes could create problems with power imbalances and in cross-cultural dialogue in general. And, along the lines of understanding and dialogue, most groups noted that there were elements of good

communication lacking, which, if rectified, would benefit all involved. All groups generally suggested more communication and stressed the importance of openness and accuracy of information in communications. Additionally, local groups generally wished for continuing contact with the volunteers after the departure of the volunteers, as this frequently was lost.

There were both positive and negative implications of some of the differences and/or similarities of the different groups, as addressed in Chapter Six. Some of these were highly dependent upon how the differences were handled by the groups, as the effects could vary. For example, in terms of the cultural differences there is potential for the positive effects are cross-cultural dialogue, but, alternately, there is also potential for perpetuation of stereotypes and a further division between the groups.

Increasing communication and ensuring its accuracy between different groups, and even within groups, would be a positive step to developing more realistic expectations and was a concern for most participants of the study. Also, increasing awareness in the community about the purpose of the volunteer tourist's visit was seen as beneficial. As well, encouraging awareness that volunteers are similar to the locals in some ways, even though they may look different and be from far away would help move things in a more positive direction by starting to try to address some of the stereotypes that currently exist and act a barrier to true dialogue. Additionally, connecting more locals with volunteer tourists through volunteering activities might encourage further dialogue and help in better understanding the 'other'. Finally, as volunteers maintaining a connection with the community after departure was seen as a very important concept to the Ghanaian groups, ensuring the volunteers are aware of this idea would help the volunteer in meeting those expectations, but also making certain that the locals are aware that, while it may be possible, not all volunteers will be able and/or willing to remain in contact.

These findings, in addition to the existing literature aim to fill in some of the gaps in the knowledge of this area. However, there is still much to know to help better develop such programs and to correct or avoid undesirable outcomes in such endeavours. This is why it is important to get the input of all impacted by volunteer tourism in order to develop an accurate and full/extensive understanding of this form of tourism. Such information, ideally, being used in the future to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects of such development for all. This could start with some of the small suggestions found above but then move on towards more cohesive and integrated project designs that truly benefit all stakeholders in volunteer tourism.

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Appendix A – Interview Questions

The following are drafts of the questions that were potentially asked in the interviews. These questions are grouped based upon the representative stakeholder groups. Questions that are tabbed are of a follow-up nature for the main question that they follow and are only to be used to stimulate the discussion if information is not forthcoming. As this was only a semi-structured interview there were also further questions probing into unclear or interesting subject areas. Most of which related to expectations brought to light by the person being interviewed. As a result of this semi-structured nature, not every interview used the exact questions provided below.

Questions for Volunteers

- What experience have you had travelling? (Not specifically volunteer based travel)
 - How often do you travel? How long are your trips generally?
 - Where have you been? Where do you want to go next?
 - What was your favourite trip? Could you describe it to me?
 - If no experience, then any certain reason why you haven't traveled?
- Have you participated in a volunteer program abroad before?
 - How would you describe your experience?
 - Where? How long? How many programs have you participated in?
 - If no, is there any specific reason(s) why not that you would be willing to share?
 - Have you volunteered before? What was that experience like?
- What made you want to volunteer abroad?
 - Do you know other people who have volunteered abroad? What did they say?
 - How did you make the decision to come on this trip?
 - Why Ghana?
 - Why now? (probing for information regarding lifestage or life changes)
 - Did you have any concerns? (ex. unfamiliar food and/or people, safety, etc.)
- How did you discover the organization? Where did you hear about this program?
 - What caught your attention about it? How did you decide that this was right for you?
 - What did it make you think your experience would be like?
- What did you expect before you began the program?
 - What did you expect to be doing?
 - Ex. How much time did you think you would be spending volunteering versus sightseeing?
 - What do you expect now?
- What did you do to prepare for your trip?
 - Was there an orientation program? What was it like?
 - How did it prepare you for what you would be doing?
 - Did you fundraise for your trip? How was that?
- What were the first few days after arrival like for you? (Examples?)
 - Did you need to make any adjustments to the program or the culture? (Example)
 - Have you experienced any problems/issues? Describe.
- How would you describe your work here? What have you been doing?
 - What do you think of the time you have spent volunteering?
 - What parts of the program do you enjoy the most?
 - What do you enjoy the least?

Are there any changes you feel are necessary in the program?
If you could change anything about the program, what would you change first?
Has the program met your expectations in terms of volunteer service?
How has it met/not met those expectations?
What was the most surprising thing you encountered in this experience?
Could you describe it for me?
Do you feel that you have accomplished what you had wanted while you were here? How so?
What do you think you will tell your family or friends about your time here?
What would you tell someone who was thinking about volunteering abroad?
Would you consider going on another experience like this again? Why or why not?
Do you think this experience will impact how you behave when you return home? How?

Questions for Organizers

How did you find out about the organization?
What made you want to get involved?
Could you describe *the organization* for me? (What they do, goals, projects underway?)
Were you part of the initial development of the organization/project?
Have the goals of the project changed over time? How? Why?
What do you do / what is your role in *the organization*?
How did you come to do this job?
Have you been involved with an organization like this before?
When? How long? What did you think of that experience?
What made you want to work with this organization compared to the last one?
How does a program get started or undertaken in a community?
How do you plan the projects that you will be doing?
Is there much consultation with the community? How is this done?
What is the role of *the organization/project* in the community?
What work is expected to be done overall? What is being done?
Are the goals of the program being met (in your opinion)?
What kind of impacts do you see coming from your contributions? (both individually on the organization and the community *AND* impacts of the organization on the community)
What impacts did you expect to see coming from your work for *the organization*?
Have those expectations changed over the time you have been involved in the project? How so?
Now, regarding the volunteers and people working in and around the organization...
How do you prepare for working in a particular community?
Do you have an orientation program for volunteers and/or employees?
How are these organized?
Is there any training provided? What is the focus/intent of training?
Do your employees have training in how to manage volunteers?
Is there a screening process for volunteers?
What is the role of an average volunteer? How are their roles determined?
What do you expect of them?
How do you expect volunteers and employees to behave?
Is there a code of conduct for volunteers and/or employees? What does it say?
Are your expectations of the volunteers being met? How/how are they not?
How many volunteers do you generally have?
How much fluctuation do you normally see in numbers of volunteers?
How does this affect how *the organization* operates?
How do you get feedback from the volunteers?

What do you think volunteers expect to be doing while working on a project?
 Are volunteers given choices on what they want to do while volunteering?
 How do you get feedback from the host community?
 What do you think the host community expects from your organization?
 Are there mechanisms in place to get this information from them?
 Is there anything you expect of the community? (cooperation, etc)
 Have you noticed any changes in the community that could be related to the organization?
 Ex. More/less: businesses; people living in the area; jobs, changes in the food offered, changes in the prices of goods, attitudes, the natural environment?
 Now, looking forward...
 Is there anything that you would like to change about your role or the organization in general?
 Are you satisfied with the work you are doing?
 Are you satisfied with the work that the organization is doing?
 Is there anything that you expected of the project that has not been fulfilled? Elaborate.
 Is there anything that has surprised you during your experience with this organization?
 If yes, please describe it.
 What would you tell a friend or family member if they were interested in volunteering abroad?

Questions for Host Community Members

Are you involved in *the organization*?
 How are you involved? What do you think of your involvement?
 Were you involved in the initial development of this organization in your community?
 How? What was it like? Do you know people from the area who were?
 Have you been involved with an organization like *this one* before?
 If yes, When? How long? What did you think of that experience?
 What differences are there between the organizations?
 How did your community come to work with *the organization*?
 What did the organization tell you to expect initially?
 For example, did they give you any indication what the volunteers might be like?
 What did you think of the development then? Why did you feel that way?
 When you first heard about it what did you expect *the organization* to do in the community?
 How does the organization work in your community?
 Ex. Is there an introduction to new volunteers that you get to participate in? What do you think of it?
 What do you think it should be doing in the community?
 How much does your community coordinate with the organization? (new sites/tasks/etc.)
 Do you provide ideas or feedback to the organization? What kind? (Concerns, etc?)
 How do you give them the information? Has it been used? Could it be used better?
 Have you noticed any changes in the community that could be related to the organization?
 Ex. More/less: businesses; people living in the area; jobs, changes in the food offered in the community, changes in the prices of goods, attitudes, the natural environment?
 Is there anything that you would like to change about the organization or volunteers?
 What changes would you like to see? How do you think this can be done?
 Are the volunteers and the organization being respectful of your community/traditions?
 How so? What are they doing? How might this be changed (if necessary)?
 What are the volunteers like (one-on-one)?
 Did you expect them to act differently than they have/do? If yes, how?
 How do you think they should behave? What activities should they be doing?
 Has the organization fulfilled your expectations of them? How/how have they not?
 Have your expectations changed since the project began? (How?)

What do you think of the organization now? Why do you feel this way?
 Is the organization meeting the needs of your community?
 Are they doing what they said that they would?
 Is there anything that has surprised you relating to the volunteers or the organization over the time it has been here?
 If yes, when and how did it/they surprise you? Describe.
 What would you say if another similar organization wanted to develop a program here now?
 Would you get involved with it?
 Do you have any concerns about the continuing presence of the organization?

Questions for Host Family Members

Are you involved in *the organization*?
 How are you involved? What do you think of your involvement?
 Were you involved in the initial development of this organization in your community?
 How? What was it like? Do you know people from the area who were?
 How did you find out about the organization?
 What made you want to get involved?
 Could you describe *the organization* for me? (What they do, goals, projects underway?)
 Were you part of the initial development of the organization/project?
 Have the goals of the project changed over time? How? Why?
 What do you do / what is your role in *the organization*?
 How did you come to do this job?
 Have you been involved with an organization like this before?
 When? How long? What did you think of that experience?
 What made you want to work with this organization compared to the last one?
 How did your community come to work with *the organization*?
 What did the organization tell you to expect initially?
 For example, did they give you any indication what the volunteers might be like?
 What did you think of the development then? Why did you feel that way?
 When you first heard about it what did you expect *the organization* to do in the community?
 How does the organization work in your community?
 Ex. Is there an introduction to new volunteers that you get to participate in? What do you think of it?
 What do you think it should be doing in the community?
 How much does your community coordinate with the organization? (new sites/tasks/etc.)
 Do you provide ideas or feedback to the organization? What kind? (Concerns, etc?)
 How do you give them the information? Has it been used? Could it be used better?
 What kind of impacts do you see coming from your contributions? (both individually on the organization and the community *AND* impacts of the organization on the community)
 What impacts did you expect to see coming from your work for *the organization*?
 Have those expectations changed over the time you have been involved in the project? How so?
 How many volunteers have you hosted?
 What is it like to host?
 Do you get feedback from the volunteers?
 What do you think volunteers expect to be doing while working on a project?
 Are volunteers given choices on what they want to do while volunteering?
 Have you noticed any changes in the community that could be related to the organization?
 Ex. More/less: businesses; people living in the area; jobs, changes in the food offered in the community, changes in the prices of goods, attitudes, the natural environment?

Now, looking forward...

Is there anything that you would like to change about the organization or volunteers?

What changes would you like to see? How do you think this can be done?

Are the volunteers and the organization being respectful of your community/traditions?

How so? What are they doing? How might this be changed (if necessary)?

What are the volunteers like (one-on-one)?

Did you expect them to act differently than they have/do? If yes, how?

How do you think they should behave? What activities should they be doing?

Has the organization fulfilled your expectations of them? How/how have they not?

Have your expectations changed since the project began? (How?)

What do you think of the organization now? Why do you feel this way?

Is the organization meeting the needs of your community?

Are they doing what they said that they would?

Is there anything that you would like to change about your role or the organization in general?

Are you satisfied with the work you are doing?

Are you satisfied with the work that the organization is doing?

Is there anything that you expected of the project that has not been fulfilled? Elaborate.

Is there anything that has surprised you during your experience with this organization?

If yes, please describe it.

What would you say if another similar organization wanted to develop a program here now?

Would you get involved with it?

Do you have any concerns about the continuing presence of the organization?

*** Italicized word(s) were substituted for the specific organization name(s) the participant was affiliated with*

Appendix B – Participant Characteristics

Presented here are charts showing the various pertinent characteristics of the participants. These are grouped based upon the representative stakeholder group.

Volunteers

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Country of Origin</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>First Language</i> | <i>Knowledge of English</i> | <i>Volunteer Placement</i> | <i>Location</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Stacey | Germany | Early 20's | German | Fluent | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Leanne | Germany | Early 20's | German | Working knowledge | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Anna | Canada | Early 40's | English | Fluent | Orphanage | Ashanti region |
| Danielle | Holland | Mid 30's | Dutch | Fluent | Orphanage & Teaching | Accra & Tamale |
| Theresa | USA | Early 20's | English | Fluent | Teaching | Tamale |

Community Members

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Role in Community</i> | <i>Interactions with Volunteers</i> | <i>Knowledge of English</i> |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Peter | 50-60 | Religious Leader | Infrequent | Fluent |
| Walter | 30-40 | Religious Leader | Rarely | Fluent |
| Ernest | 20-30 | Wait-staff at Restaurant | Frequent | Working Knowledge |
| Albert | 20-30 | Wait-staff at Restaurant | Frequent | Working Knowledge |

Host Family Members

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Affiliated Organization</i> | <i># of Volunteers Hosted</i> | <i># of Times Hosting</i> | <i>Approx. Duration of Involvement</i> | <i>Previous Involvement in Organizations</i> | <i>Continued Hosting</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Robert | Organization A | 30-50 | 20-35 | 3 years | Yes | Yes |
| Monica | Organization B | 1 | 1 | 1 year | No | Yes |
| Myles | Organization B | 1 | 1 | 1 year | No | Yes |
| Samantha | Organization A | 3 | 1 | 1 month | No | Yes |
| Mary | Organization A | 30-50 | 20-35 | 3 years | Yes | Yes |

Organization Members

| <i>Pseudo-nym</i> | <i>Affiliation</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Thoughts Regarding Other Areas in Need of Assistance from Volunteers</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|---|
| Rose | Orphanage staff | 50-70 | Schools and health care |
| Franklin | Organization A | 20-30 | Schools |
| Shawn | Government | 20-30 | Schools and health care |
| Beau | Government | 20-30 | Schools, health care, aging population, and environment |
| Barry | Government | 20-30 | Schools, health care and environment |
| Flint | Church | 50-60 | Schools, health care, and aging population |