

**CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM: THE  
ROLE OF SENDING ORGANISATIONS IN FOSTERING CROSS-CULTURAL  
UNDERSTANDING**

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## **Abstract**

Volunteer tourism has become a popular phenomenon worldwide and questions have been raised about the work that international volunteers do in Third World countries. Scholars have debated the possibility of a cross-cultural ‘misunderstanding’ developing between international volunteers and local community members. This research is based on the idea that there can be a possibility for cross-cultural understanding to take place. This thesis aims to gain better insight into the role that volunteer tourism organisations (VTOs) play in fostering cross-cultural understanding between the volunteers and the local community members that they work with.

A framework suggested by tourism expert Eliza Raymond (2007) was used to assess how exactly organisations play a part in encouraging this type of understanding. The research focuses on two VTOs, Projects Abroad and Coaching for Hope as case studies. Both these organisations are involved in the facilitation of development programmes in disadvantaged communities in Cape Town.

The data for this research was collected through a number of qualitative techniques which include in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis. The findings of the research suggest that organisational structure influences the capacity of an organisation to encourage cross-cultural understanding. It also emerged that having host families as a form of accommodation for volunteers greatly increases the possibility of cross-cultural understanding. Diversity in the volunteer group itself was identified as the first step in ensuring that volunteers can understand and learn from one another before attempting to understand community members.

In conclusion the research found that VTOs play a significant role in facilitating cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and community members through their organisational structure; learning through immersion and diversity of volunteers. This shows that there is potential for VTOs to have a greater impact in communities which may lessen the occurrence of ‘cross-cultural misunderstanding’. Recommendations were made for South African volunteer tourism organisations to be more committed to ethical practice and for the government to further develop policies that recognise volunteer tourism and encourage adherence to responsible tourism principles.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Volunteer tourism is a form of tourism that is currently taking place all over the world. It has been described by scholars as a form of alternative tourism. Scholars such as Stephen Wearing mainly from the First World have studied aspects of volunteer tourism beginning with how it differs from mainstream tourism and whether or not it has been beneficial to society (Wearing, 2001). Over the last decade research in this area has also delved into the impact of volunteer tourism on volunteers as well as more recently on the host communities they work in (McGehee & Andereck, 2009).

Volunteer tourism as an industry has experienced much growth in the last two decades with a tourism survey reporting over 1.6 million volunteer tourists in 2008 (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:13). Various types of organisations make up the industry including commercial businesses and non-profit organisations (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). With such a variety of organisations it is almost certain that their aims and objectives are different.

The most recent studies in the area of volunteer tourism attempt to understand volunteer tourism in the context of development (Butcher & Smith, 2010; Hammersley, 2013). This research takes on Stephen Wearing's view in which he recognises that volunteer tourism can be beneficial to all parties concerned. He says the following, "Volunteer tourism can be viewed as a sustainable development strategy that strives to be beneficial for the environment, local residents and the visitor" (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:11).

In order to fully understand its impact as a developmental tool, it is necessary to understand the role that sending organisations play in making the experience most effective and productive. This research places emphasis on understanding the role of sending organisations in volunteer tourism. By taking into account that these organisations play a vital role in facilitating a relationship between the host community and the volunteers there is much to be explored from the potential benefits of volunteer tourism in development. The research

focuses on two organisations that are involved in volunteer tourism and operate in Cape Town, South Africa.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Volunteer tourism has been understood by some as a model by which development can be stimulated in Third World countries. Stephen Wearing suggests the following, "...it can be viewed as a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centring the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitor that all benefit from tourism activity" (Wearing, 2001:12).

In this way an interactive relationship between the volunteer tourist and the community is developed. Through this relationship an exchange of ideas then follows leading to sustainable solutions to development problems.

Volunteer tourism has a number of weaknesses. Many of these weaknesses affect the local community members the most (Guttentag, 2009). Volunteer tourists in some instances take on a job that could be undertaken by a citizen of a particular country (Guttentag, 2009). This is a serious issue particularly in South Africa where there the unemployment rate is 24.3% and largest among the youth (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Another major criticism of volunteer tourism is that it reinforces negative stereotypes about Third World countries (Simpson, 2004). These weaknesses are discussed in further detail in section 2.6 of this dissertation.

The weaknesses of volunteer tourism may be reduced to the flaws of development itself. Post-development theorist and anthropologist Arturo Escobar describes development as having a regressive effect on the poor nations of the world. He describes development as having been a failure evident through malnourishment and chronic poverty and impoverishment (Escobar, 1992). He contends that the discourse of development managed to order and control the world. He goes on to highlight that it is this same discourse that created the 'Third World'. Escobar (1992) argues that people in the Third World do not consider themselves as 'underdeveloped'. Therefore the discourse of development has imposed 'labels' and 'abnormalities' that did not previously exist (Escobar, 1997:88). This leads to the

binary of the developed being superior and those being developed as being inferior (Escobar, 1997).

This approach to development is helpful in explaining the failure of development. Escobar (1997:87) and other post-development theorists see development as being a ‘eurocentric’ concept and this is problematic because development cannot be seen as being a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Several scholars have critiqued this view for oversimplifying and romanticising local communities and their cultures (Pieterse, 2000; Corbridge, 1998). Critics further argue that although post-development has led to more critical debate on development, it has completely ignored the positive aspects of development in Third World countries (Pieterse, 2000).

In the case of volunteer tourism, community contexts must be understood and negotiated carefully by the volunteers rather than volunteers imposing their own ideas on how to do things (Hammersley, 2013). The majority of the research on volunteer tourism is focused on the tourists’ experience after participating in projects. It is also focused on the impact made by specific projects that volunteers have worked on. Very little research has been conducted into whether volunteer tourists are still needed after so many years of operation and whether the sector has become over-commercialised. A report released by Tourism Research and Marketing (TRAM) on volunteer tourism in 2008 highlighted that the industry has a value of over 2 billion US dollars (Wearing & Grabowski, 2011). However it is difficult to decipher how many organisations are involved purely to make a profit. Volunteer tourism work in communities has been hailed for its contribution to solidarity, reciprocity and understanding (Wearing & Grabowski, 2011; Zahra & McGehee, 2013; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

The TRAM report further revealed that the majority of volunteer tourists travel from the global North to destinations such as Latin America, Africa and Asia (Wearing, 2014:14). These are largely Third World destinations with a colonial past. There has also been little inquiry into how historical relations between the North and South indirectly influence the relations between host communities and volunteers. Sending organisations are at the centre of these relations, facilitating processes on either end. Therefore it is vital to investigate what role they play in mediating the colonial ideology that has been assimilated into Third World societies. In his book *The Tourist Gaze*, John Urry applies postcolonial theory to tourism. He asserts that the tourist gaze is strongly associated with ‘othering’. He further suggests that this

gaze is founded on their perception of the other's world which is ultimately influenced by 'colonial myths' (Urry, 2002:511).

Recommendations have been made on how host and sending organisations can set an example of best practice. These recommendations are centred on the potential of cross-cultural understanding taking place between the volunteers and local community members. This in turn enhances volunteer tourism as a development model (Raymond, 2007). In addition it may enhance the experiences of both the volunteer and the host communities and increase the impact that is made through volunteer tourism programmes in Third World countries.

My research therefore aims to investigate how sending organisations can be able to facilitate cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and community members. The research is based on the framework provided by Raymond (2007) on good practice in volunteer tourism. The results of this research provide useful information for volunteer tourism organisations (VTOs) operating in Third World countries.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The overall research objective is to investigate how organisations ensure that cross-cultural understanding takes place throughout the planning and implementation stages of their projects. This can be further broken down into several objectives as follows:

- To investigate how sending organisations develop appropriate programmes with the needs of host communities in mind
- To outline how the sending organisation prepares the volunteer tourist to undertake their role in the community
- To investigate how volunteers view their role within the community
- To examine how the sending organisation encourages volunteer tourists to approach the programme as a learning process
- To outline the extent of cross-cultural understanding between the volunteer and the host community

## **1.4 Concept Clarification**

### *Volunteer Tourism*

According to Stephen Wearing (2001) volunteer tourism refers to the combination of voluntary work with a tourist experience. The outcome of volunteer tourism is a mutually beneficial experience that will not only benefit the volunteer through personal development but also make a contribution to society.

### *Cross-Cultural Understanding*

Cross-cultural understanding refers to the awareness and appreciation of the other that takes place between a volunteer and a local community member (Wearing, 2001). Through individual interaction the volunteer tourists are able to gain a sophisticated understanding of the local communities they are involved in as well as the issues they face (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

### *Host Community*

The people that live in the area in which the volunteer programme takes place (Raymond, 2007)

### *Sending Organisation/ Volunteer Tourism Organisation*

This organisation develops and organises the volunteer tourism programmes. Sending organisations range from locally-based non-profit organisations, to multinational commercial organisations. These organisations may operate outside the country where volunteers operate (Raymond, 2007). For this particular research project the sending organisations are organisations based in the host country (South Africa), that send volunteers to other smaller organisations in the host communities.

## 1.5 Operationalisation

Operationalisation is the process by which “abstract concepts are turned into observable and measurable quantities” (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:170). In this particular research project, a theory proposed by Raymond (2007), will be investigated to meet the set objectives. Raymond (2007) suggested a framework for good practice for sending organisations based on the following three principles and sub principles:

- **Accurately matching volunteers’ capabilities with project needs**
  - Developing and marketing a project accurately
  - Taking into account the special capabilities and matching those accordingly to complement and suit the goals of the project
  - Adequately preparing volunteers for their chosen project
  
- **Focussing more on ‘experiential learning’**
  - Encouraging volunteers to keep a diary during their stay
  - Encouraging debriefing sessions for volunteers after each day/ week to reflect on their role in the project
  - Encouraging two way interaction with the community- possibly placing volunteers in host families
  
- **Encouraging cross-cultural understanding between volunteers**
  - Maintaining diversity within the volunteer tourist group
  - Encouraging interaction between international and local volunteers

These principles will be the basis from which cross-cultural understanding will be assessed.

## **1.6 Outline of Organisations**

The two organisations that this research focused on are Projects Abroad and Coaching for Hope (a South African implementing partner for Skillshare International). Both these organisations have an international presence and are committed to fostering development through volunteering. Projects Abroad and Skillshare International recruit international volunteers particularly from First World countries to work in local communities in Cape Town. These organisations are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

## **1.7 Outline of Chapters**

The first chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to introducing the topic of cross-cultural understanding and volunteer tourism as well as outlining the key research objectives. Chapter two elaborates on the existing literature on volunteer tourism organisations, communities and international volunteers. It also presents the two organisations that are used in this research as case studies. Chapter three of the dissertation discusses the methodological framework used to answer the research question. It mentions in detail the data collection techniques used as well as the ethical considerations taken into account to maintain the integrity of the research. The findings of the research are outlined using direct quotations from the interview transcripts in chapter four. The concluding chapter discusses the findings from chapter four in detail, make recommendations to organisations and identifies new paths for future research on the topic.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter was aimed at outlining the research area and providing an overall rationale for the research project. The chapter discussed the research objectives in detail and elaborated on the key terms that are used in the dissertation. This introductory chapter also presented the framework that is used in the analysis as well as the underlying principles. It was useful to give an overview of the background to the research project.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the existing literature in the field of volunteer tourism. The chapter begins by tracing mass tourism from its roots to its evolution into different forms of niche tourism. The researcher makes use of previous research to follow the path that volunteer tourism has taken from its formation to its current state, both locally and on an international stage. The chapter then discusses among other things, the controversies that exist within volunteer tourism and the opportunity for cross-cultural understanding to enhance the effectiveness of volunteer tourism. The last section of this chapter provides a review of the organisations involved in this research, their volunteers and corresponding projects.

### 2.2 History of Tourism

Traditionally the history of tourism begins with its emergence during the Renaissance period in Europe leading to the emergence of “spas, Grand tours and seaside resorts” through the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively (Towner, 1995:339). Thomas Cook managed to change the way people viewed travel by introducing tours outside of Europe to Egypt, Japan and New Zealand in the late 1870s (Thomas Cook, 2014). Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, identified “the right to rest and leisure”, giving people the ability to take time away from work to go on holiday (United Nations, 1948). Since then people have made leisure and travel part of their lives.

Towner (1995) however outlined that the history of tourism as it is known favours a western trajectory. This is largely attributed to the fact that journals and documented writings of travellers in the West recounted their own travels and experiences during their time. The dominance of such documentation then influenced what became known as history (Towner, 1995). The western travellers’ account of their travels to Africa often described local cultures and traditions as primitive (Witz, Rassool & Minkey, 2001). In recent times those same traditions and cultural markers are showcased in townships tours and cultural villages are

now revered as ‘authentic’ markers of the ‘real Africa’ (Witz, Rassool & Minkey, 2001:278). Some have argued that such forms of tourism encourage tourists to be voyeuristic and start to view the locals as the “other” (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:118).

## **2.3 Development and Tourism**

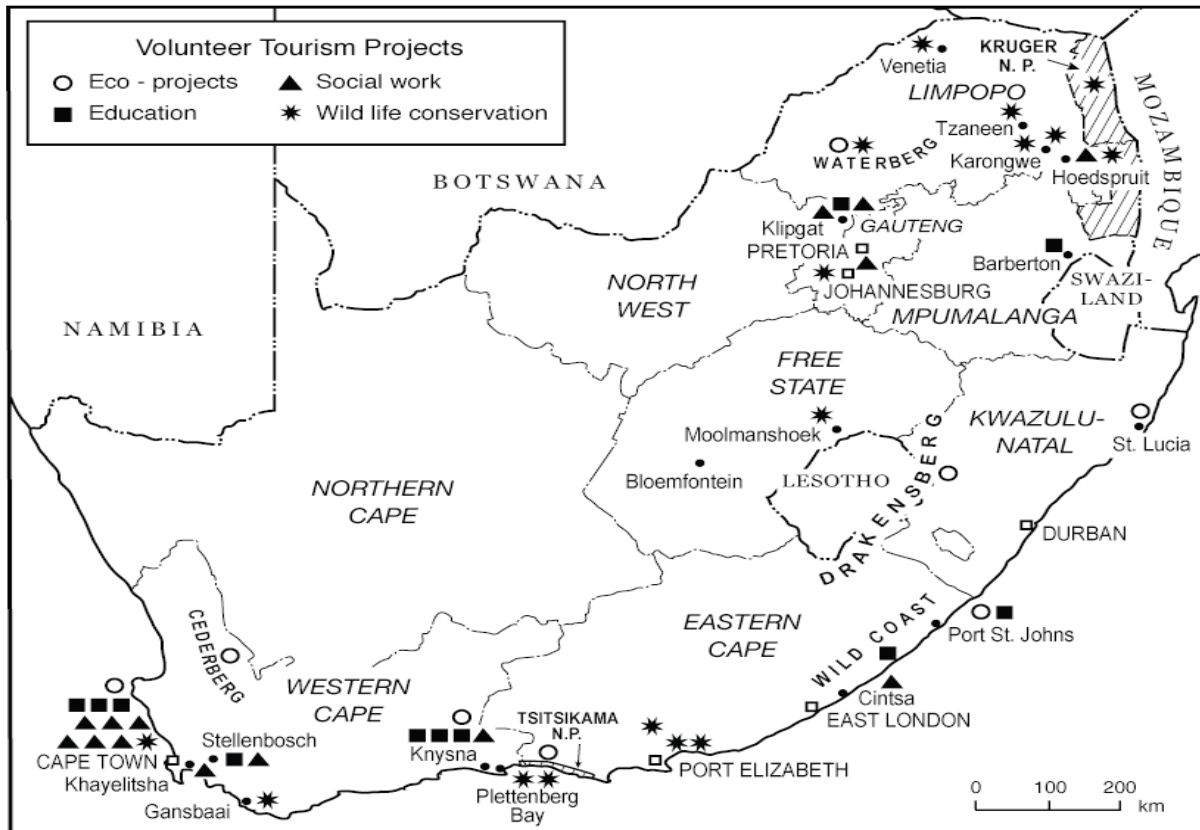
Freelance researchers Martin Mowforth & Ian Munt discuss the evolution of development over the years. The researchers trace development from modernisation theory all the way to neoliberal development strategies (Mowforth & Munt, 2009:32). During the 1990s the term ‘sustainable development’ was introduced. Its focus was on environmental issues that required immediate attention (Mowforth & Munt, 2009:33). The researchers suggest that currently the world is in an age of seeking alternatives to development. Some scholars have argued that the Third World has no option but to follow a Eurocentric development path (Esteva as cited in Mowforth & Munt, 2009:34). This is because Third World tourism is dependant on the First World which can be traced to a colonial past (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Mowforth & Munt (2009:53) assert that tourism and development are examples of First World hegemony.

### **2.3.1 Development and Tourism in South Africa**

The use of tourism as a development tool is something particularly new to Africa in comparison to the rest of the world (Rogerson & Visser, 2004:2). It has since become an area of interest to governments and local policy makers in recent years. Rogerson & Visser (2004:3) reflect on the “anti-developmental” nature of the tourism sector during apartheid since the majority of the population did not benefit from it. South Africa’s isolation from the rest of the world economy impacted the tourism sector in the country. Therefore a policy shift with regard to tourism was urgently needed post 1994.

Some of the guiding principles that informed the new forms of tourism in South Africa were based on the idea of responsible tourism (Rogerson & Visser, 2004:7). Tourism in South Africa was identified as an industry that would be driven by the private sector. It would however take into account environmentally sustainable principles and focus on the empowerment of local communities (Rogerson & Visser, 2004:9). Figure 1 below paints a

vivid picture of how volunteer tourism projects are spread across South Africa. A number of the projects are concentrated along the coast and in the north of the country in the Limpopo province (Govender & Rogerson, 2010). Cape Town hosts a number of social work and education projects (ibid).



**Figure 1: ‘Volunteer Tourism Projects’ derived from Govender & Rogerson (2010)**

There has been very little reporting by the government on alternative forms of tourism in South Africa. However the National Tourism Sector Strategy report by the Department of Tourism recognises that there are increasing numbers of people coming to South Africa to volunteer (Department of Tourism, 2011). The focus is still largely on conventional mass tourism. Tourism statistics reflect this very clearly by focusing reporting solely on mass tourism in the majority of reports produced. According to the Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report of 2014 by the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism in South Africa has made a total contribution of R478.3bn to GDP in 2014. This is approximately 9.8%, which has increased by 3.6% from 2013 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014:3). A report released by the Department of Tourism in 2014, shows that in 2013 close to 10 million international tourists travelled to South Africa (Department of Tourism, 2013). In 2013 the

highest number of overseas tourists was from the UK, making up 16.4% of the total which amounted to 436 599 tourists. The USA was second with 347 378 tourists constituting 13.1%. Germany was a close third with 300 739 making up 11.3% (Statistics South Africa, 2013).

## **2.4 Volunteer Tourism in Context**

Volunteer tourism is largely recognised as a form of alternative tourism (Salazar, 2004). This form of tourism contrasts with ‘mass tourism’ which has been the predominant form since the early 1950s (Novelli & Robinson, 2005). Several scholars have attempted to explain how niche tourism emerged out of mainstream mass tourism. American anthropologist Noel Salazar suggests that volunteer tourism has emerged as an alternative in order to address the issues that rose out of mass tourism. One of the main issues is tourists finding it challenging to engage with local communities (Salazar, 2004).

Ioannides & Debbage (1997) track the shift from mass to niche tourism to the shift in capitalist systems. They discuss the movement from Fordist production systems that mass produced standardized goods. Post Fordist production on the other hand was brought on by the emergence of technology. This allowed greater flexibility in production, tailoring products to customer needs (Ioannides & Debbage, 1997:230). The shifts in industry had ripple effects on tourism. During the Fordist period which was from the 1950s to the 1990s standardized holiday packages were offered to a mass market which consisted of ‘inexperienced and predictable’ tourists (Ioannides & Debbage, 1997:232). Furthermore the packages on offer were largely determined by tour operators. From the 1990s onwards the tourism industry was characterized by more personalized holidays catering to niche markets (Ioannides & Debbage, 1997:232). Network alliances and partnerships between key players in the industry are now common features. The travel options nowadays are largely determined by the tourists’ needs.

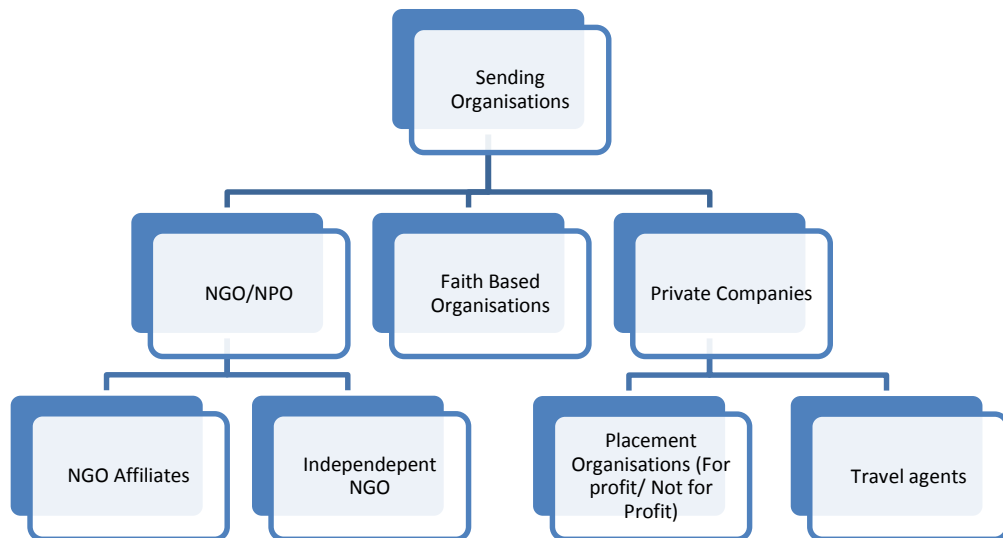
Callanan & Thomas (2005) on the other hand propose that volunteer tourism is fast becoming a “mass niche market”. This they say this has resulted from society becoming increasingly “guilt conscious”. The expectation is that other niche markets may start to come out of

volunteer tourism given the number of different organisations operating within it (Callanan & Thomas, 2005).

Changes have come about in the tourism industry due to globalisation (Saarinen, Becker, Manwa et. al, 2009:4). New forms of tourism started to emerge that were distinctly different from conventional mass tourism (Saarinen, Becker, Manwa, et.al, 2009:6). Africa is a unique case because of its 'wildness'. The authors of *African Hosts & their Guests* have argued that Africa as a continent is seen by tourists as a home for animals and not necessarily people (Schmidt & Van Beek, 2012). This is different to how other tourist destinations are viewed on the basis of their scenic nature, monumental and historical value. The way in which Africa is showcased through the media be it through National Geographic documentaries or poverty and hunger features on the news creates stereotypes about the continent (Schmidt & Van Beek, 2012). South Africa is in the top five destinations that volunteers would like to work in (GeckoGo, 2009).

## **2.5 Volunteer Tourism Organisations (VTOs) and their Projects**

Volunteer tourism organisations have started to grow in numbers in the last decade (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:49). This is mainly due to the opportunities that are present in the industry. These include travel abroad for international students and facilitating exchange between different cultures (Dugid, Mundel & Schugurensky, 2013). A range of different organisations have emerged including tour operators, non-governmental organisations and academic groups that offer work experience in the development sector (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). The figure below displays the different types of organisations that exist within the volunteer tourism sphere locally or internationally.



**Figure 2: Types of sending organisation operating in Volunteer Tourism Sector  
Derived from Lynch (2009) and Hedley, Rochester & Smith (2005)**

The first group of organisations are non-governmental organisations that may be multinational such as Habitat for Humanity, or local independent organisations. These organisations are likely to run their own programmes or be closely affiliated with local community based organisations (CBOs) (Hedley, Rochester, & Smith, 2005:68).

Faith based organisations are another type that may send volunteers as missionaries or on development projects that are supported by the church (Lynch, 2009). The last category of sending organisations to be discussed is private companies. These include placement organisations that place volunteers with local operational NGOs and local CBOs. There are also private companies that run their own projects and expeditions (Lynch, 2009:9). Travel agencies are private companies that sell all inclusive packages that link volunteers with local organisations (Lynch, 2009:10). Salazar (2004) discusses the tendency to assume that NGOs are the most committed to development objectives. Salazar goes on to suggest that many NGOs involved in volunteer tourism activity might not be consciously doing so to foster development goals.

Wearing & McGehee (2013:50) suggest that the impact of volunteer tourism may be affected by the type of organisations that operate in that sector. They suggest that the profit making organisations tend to seek to appease the volunteer who is their primary client.

The type of projects that VTOs are involved in varies. The specific number of VTOs in South Africa is difficult to determine, as there are different kinds of organisations in various sectors. Wearing & McGehee (2013:90) propose that in order for volunteer tourism projects to be meaningful they must be 'decommodified' and have a community focus. They present an evaluative framework that has been used worldwide to ensure that volunteer tourism projects are making a valuable contribution. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) developed by the International Ecotourism Society (IES) has four main guidelines:

"...effective sustainable management, maximising social and economic benefits to the local community, reduction of negative impacts to environmental heritage and the reduction of negative impact to cultural heritage" (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:91).

Callanan & Thomas (2005) discuss the ambiguity of volunteer tourism by definition. The organisations involved are different and can sometimes offer very diverse projects varying in duration and skills required. The scholars draw on the work of Arne Naets (1972) and Richard Sylvan (1985) in the field of ecology and apply this to volunteer tourism. This involves the classification of 'Shallow', 'Intermediate' and 'Deep' volunteer tourism projects. These frameworks assesses the duration of the project, how the project or destination is marketed, the level of participation, the expertise or skills the volunteers possess and the level of contribution to the locals (Callanan & Thomas, 2005:198). These frameworks aid in the proper assessment of volunteer projects and their involvement in local communities.

A similar framework can be developed to evaluate VTOs and their programmes in the Third World. In 2011 the Department of Tourism of South Africa released a set of guidelines called the *National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism* (NMSRT) (Department of Tourism, 2011). This initiative was aimed at encouraging individual tourism businesses to be certified. The criteria used for certification included four categories, namely sustainable operations management; economic; social and cultural and environmental (ibid). The NMSRT does not focus specifically on volunteer tourism organisations in South Africa. This may limit the proper evaluation of volunteer projects. However through academic research the evaluative scholarship may encourage significant tourism bodies to set standards that dictate volunteer tourism practices in South Africa. Fair Trade, a non-profit organisation in South Africa developed a set of standards for responsible tourism in South Africa, which they have called *Fair Trade Learning (FTL)* (Hartman, Paris & Blache-Cohen, 2014). These standards focus on how to properly manage and operate volunteer projects (ibid)

## **2.6 Volunteers and Communities in Volunteer Tourism**

### **2.6.1 Volunteers**

In the last decade volunteer tourism research has placed much emphasis on investigating the volunteers involved in projects. Many studies have focused on volunteer motivation (Grabowski, in Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Benson & Siebert, 2012; and Sin 2009). Other studies have explored the impact of volunteering on the volunteer (Alexander, 2012; Wiik, 2005). The most recent studies have attempted to understand the relationship between volunteer tourists and local communities in the Third World given the colonial history that exists. (Butcher & Smith, 2010; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Sin, 2010; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

An online study conducted by an independent traveller website GeckoGo in 2009, provided some insights into the profile of volunteer tourists. The study respondents were predominately females from Europe and North America (GeckoGo, 2009). Nearly half of the respondents used volunteer tourism organisations to facilitate their travel. The study revealed that the “convenience” and “usefulness” of the project were very important factors in selecting a potential volunteer destination (GeckoGo, 2009:12). The majority of the volunteers were likely to spend a thousand US dollars or more for approximately a month of volunteering abroad. Over half of the respondents felt that the experience was meaningful and some of the best parts included learning about new cultures and exchange of ideas (GeckoGo, 2009). Previous research has shown that international volunteer tourists are generally white (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007); predominantly female (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004) and under 35 years of age (Sin, 2009). Their motivations for volunteering vary from seeking adventure and altruism to cultural exchange. (Wearing, 2001; Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Benson & Siebert, 2012).

Volunteer tourists coming to South Africa are typically from the USA and Europe (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Research has shown that over 70% of volunteer tourists to South Africa are female (Alexander, 2012). Volunteer tourists coming to South Africa are mostly between the ages of 16 and 35 (Alexander, 2012), however organisations such as Habitat for Humanity South Africa have reported having a significant number of volunteers between 50

and 59 (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). This older group of people volunteers mainly because they are taking a break in their careers and are financially able to do so (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). The younger volunteer tourists are either taking a gap year and still identifying potential areas of interests for further study or they are currently studying and wanting to get practical experience for their studies (Alexander, 2012).

The profile of the volunteers has been deemed to be somewhat problematic by some scholars. Butcher & Smith, (2010:31) interrogate the ethics of having volunteers from affluent backgrounds becoming agents of change in what they term “areas of political consumption”. They contend that development can be used as rehabilitation for those that can afford to participate. McGehee & Santos (2005:760) outline that finances are central to volunteer tourism which involves, “...utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need.”

The profile of the volunteers puts them in a unique situation as agents of change that actually have to pay for the opportunity to help. Tourism analyst Daniel Guttentag highlights that in some instances the presence of such volunteers results in unintended loss of jobs for unskilled local community members (Guttentag, 2009). Consequently the role of “gap year” volunteers has come under immense scrutiny (Simpson, 2004; Butcher & Smith, 2010). However research has started to focus more and more on the impact of volunteering on local communities.

### **2.6.2 Communities**

The majority of the research conducted on the issue of volunteer tourism has not always been focused on host communities. This may be attributed to the fear that host communities may in some instances criticize the project in a way that is challenging to sending or host organisations (Guttentag, 2012: 154).

In the research conducted in Ho, Ghana, Swan found that the host community (the Ewes), were aware of the differences between them and the volunteer tourists. They attached whiteness to experiences of slavery, colonialism and missionaries (Swan, 2012:249). However there was a variance in perception based on age (Swan, 2012:250). The younger Ewes regarded the Americans as the ticket out of Africa. They therefore tried to seem more appealing to the volunteers by dressing in a more ‘Westernised’ manner. This resulted in

many of the volunteers feeling quite uncomfortable as the hosts were not behaving in the manner they had expected (Swan, 2012:250). The older generation was quite resentful of this and likened the younger Ewes to slaves, blindly adhering to Western tradition at the expense of their own. The older Ewes preferred that the youth should combine Western traditions with local culture (Swan, 2012:251).

One major concern Guttentag raises is the issue of dependency. There is a danger that host communities will become heavily reliant on the donations and assistance they receive from the host organisation and/ or the volunteers. This might in some instances stifle their own growth and result in them never really becoming self-sufficient (Guttentag, 2012:154).

## **2.7 Volunteer Tourism Critique**

Volunteer tourism has been criticized for its shortcomings which according to some theorists may result in unintended consequences. Guttentag (2012:153) states that the benefits of volunteer tourism have been accepted without much critical assessment. Several critiques have been found in literature enable the beginning of this critical assessment.

### **2.7.1 The definition**

According to Swan (2012) there is ambivalence as to how international volunteer tourism can be classified. On one hand it may be considered as development since there are large numbers of people from developed countries seeking to “make a difference” in the lives of those in less developed countries in the continents of Asia, Africa and South America (Swan, 2012:245). On the other hand many of these volunteers pay as much as seven thousand dollars in order to have this experience; therefore they can be likened to tourists who are simply paying for a holiday package (Swan, 2012:245).

Volunteer tourism cannot be simply defined as just volunteering or just tourism. Volunteer tourism is therefore surrounded by ambiguity as there is some confusion about whether it is work or leisure and whether it is about development or making a profit (Tomazos, 2010). Tomazos (2010) suggests that this confusion impacts the way in which volunteer tourism projects are marketed. Marketing is an important aspect of volunteer tourism projects as it plays a part in the reinforcing of stereotypes which is discussed in the next section.

### 2.7.2 Postcolonialism and Volunteer Tourism

Critics of volunteer tourism have strongly argued that it does very little to challenge the neocolonial assumptions which it is founded on. Postcolonial theory can be applied to volunteer tourism by identifying the ways in which it creates a category of helpers and another category of recipients (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Volunteer tourism has been criticized for not addressing the ways in which it contributes to the reinforcing of stereotypes as well as systems of power and privilege (Brown & Hall, 2008).

Research conducted by Swan (2012) with American volunteer tourists in Ho, Ghana explored how Africa can sometimes be seen as a parallel universe.<sup>1</sup>This often creates curiosity in volunteer tourists who come to render their services on the continent. In this particular case, volunteer tourists viewed themselves as being somewhat better than a normal tourist because they attached a moral aspect to their work (Swan, 2012:244). This view changed over time as the volunteer tourists started to feel short changed given the large sums of money that they had paid for the experience in Ho (Swan, 2012:244). This led them to the realisation that money was actually the one thing that made them no different to being an actual tourist (Swan, 2012:248).

Guttentag (2009) outlined that the way volunteer projects are marketed is in some instances inaccurate and encourages the reinforcement of stereotypes. In her research of gap-year volunteer tourist programmes, Kate Simpson (2004) found that through marketing some organisations oversimplify problems in the Third World, hence legitimising the presence of First World volunteers. The language that is used in the marketing includes ideas of “making a difference” and being a “change maker” (Simpson, 2004:684). Simpson likens this to Said’s ideas of *Orientalism*. In this case the Third World is perceived as having “spaces with consumable experience”. A new discourse of development is formed, one in which development can be “done” by any person who is enthusiastic enough to volunteer although poorly skilled (Simpson, 2004:685). The volunteer tourists are led to believe that the Third World is in “need” of them since it is being ravaged by “poverty, hunger and disease”. This is a gross generalization but however fosters the idea that Third World needs First World volunteers to help it to develop (Simpson, 2004:686). Implicit in this way of thinking is the belief that there is a separation between people from countries that can help and others that

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to what was discussed in Section 1.9 on the tourist gaze.

need the help. The issue of dependency is another problem with volunteer tourism. Communities may become dependent on the volunteers in a way that negatively impacts them when the volunteers leave (Guttentag, 2009). In some instances the interests of volunteer tourism organisations or the volunteers may take precedence over the community's (Palacios, 2010).

It is important to understand and critically engage with the weaknesses of volunteer tourism. In a South African context, the history of the country is an important factor to take into account. This becomes particularly relevant when we look at unemployment, bearing in mind that one of the unintended consequences of volunteer tourism is possible redundancy (Guttentag, 2009). This may have a detrimental effect on the employment of local individuals since volunteer tourists are free labour and actually pay for their experience (Guttentag, 2009).

Volunteer tourism can be used to benefit local communities by shifting the focus to cross-cultural understanding rather than merely wanting to make a profit. The next section discusses this in more detail.

## **2.8 Cross-cultural Understanding in Volunteer Tourism**

Guttentag (2012) argues that cross-cultural exchange can take place as a result of volunteer tourism and it should be beneficial for both the host and the volunteer. More importantly Guttentag (2012:156) points out that the host organisation has a huge role to play in the fostering of this relationship between the volunteer tourists and the host communities.

In some instances host and sending organisations are the same, since one may be in the First World, operating as a multinational organisation, sending volunteers to its subsidiary in the Third World. In other instances the host organisation may be a profit making company that merely facilitates the administrative side of the travel and placement arrangements for the volunteers (Raymond & Hall, 2008:534).

In their research of the development of cross-cultural understanding through volunteer tourism, Raymond & Hall (2008) found that sending organisations have an immense role to play in the success of volunteer tourism itself. The authors suggest that sending organisations

are crucial to the formation of cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and communities.

Raymond (2007) provided three recommendations that could be made to sending organisations to enhance the work that they do. The first suggestion is placing the host community at the centre of all decision making. The authors proposed that research should be done inductively, by first looking at what the actual community needs are and then selecting volunteers to match those needs. In addition host organisations must choose to bring in volunteers by recognizing that they have something to contribute that is not merely financial (Raymond, 2012:162). In addition the volunteers should possess the necessary skills for their role and understand that their role should not undermine local staff. The sending organisations must ensure that for all their programmes there is equal power shared amongst the key players in the project which means that host communities are consulted for their knowledge and expertise (Raymond, 2007). In addition sending organisations must ensure that projects are marketed fairly and ethically in a manner that also reflects how the host community sees its own community (Raymond, 2007).

Secondly Raymond (2007) challenged the assumption that mere contact with the ‘other’ will result in cross-cultural understanding. An emphasis on “experiential learning” rather than contact was proposed. In this way volunteers are encouraged to reflect on their journey by keeping journals or through discussions of their experiences in the project and how they may identify with local people.

The final suggestion addressed is the issue of the facilitation of cultural interaction between volunteers and host communities. Volunteers could be placed with host families in the local community in order to gain a lived experience. These sentiments were echoed by Swan (2012). Host communities in Ho, Ghana complained that the volunteers did not live amongst the local people but rather in hotels away from the community (Swan, 2012:251). Another way of encouraging interaction is diversity within the volunteer tourist group itself. Evidence from research suggests that there is a need to include volunteers of various nationalities within their groups (Raymond & Hall, 2008: 540). In this way the process of cultural interaction begins internally before it can move externally.

Hammersley (2013) echoes Raymond (2007)’s sentiments. She conducted research with Australian volunteers on the island of Vanuatu. She found that the use of education was an important way to guarantee that volunteers were adequately prepared before and after

volunteering. This was done through regular debriefing sessions and the encouragement of keeping journals. In this way volunteers were encouraged to adopt an attitude which enables them to learn from their experience and reflect upon it (Hammersley, 2013:863).

Cross-cultural understanding has been thought to bring about desirable outcomes. Sherraden, Lough & Moore (2008) assess the value of the development of cross-cultural understanding in international volunteering. They assert that it can assist in countering the negative stereotypes about the Third World and its problems by altering the volunteers' worldview. Cross-cultural understanding should lead to a celebration rather than a mocking of cultural difference (Sherraden, Lough & Moore, 2008:410).

Volunteer tourism is recognised as being a driving force in encouraging volunteers and host communities to become "global citizens" (McGehee & Santos, 2005:775). This, according to Lee & Woosnam (2010) is what distinguishes volunteer tourism from mass tourism. Volunteers have the ability to engage with communities for longer periods at a deeper and more meaningful level. Both volunteers and host communities as a result are encouraged to regard each other as equals, each with a different part to play towards the betterment of society (Sherraden Lough, & Moore, 2008). McGehee & Santos (2005) suggest that cross-cultural understanding and consciousness-raising come hand in hand and allow volunteers to become more invested in pursuing social justice and activism after having gained greater insight into global issues such as poverty and inequality. These findings suggest that cross-cultural understanding enhances the positive effects of volunteer tourism as a whole through the development of socially conscious individuals. Suggestions have been made that further research in the field should focus on the ways in which sending organisations encourage the development of social networks between the volunteers and the host community as this would increase the potential for volunteer tourism as a development strategy (McGehee, 2012).

Wearing & McGehee (2013) further the assertion that volunteer tourism research has not focused enough on the exchange that takes between the volunteer and host communities and by so doing has not addressed the colonial past, "... a postcolonial criticism enables us to destabilize and deconstruct Eurocentric, homogenizing notions of the coloniser and the colonized which can pervade the way to analyze this exchange" (Wearing & McGehee, 2013:120). Therefore it is important that more research within volunteer tourism focus on thoroughly understanding this 'exchange' as a means to minimize the negative effects of it.

## **2.9 Organisational Profiles**

### **2.9.1 Introduction**

The organisations that were selected for the research project are Projects Abroad South Africa and Coaching for Hope, an implementing partner of the international organisation Skillshare International. Both these organisations are sending organisations that partner with other smaller NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) for volunteer projects. The information provided about these organisations was sourced from their respective websites, interviews with organisation representatives, organisational documentation, observation sessions by the researcher and a previous research dissertation (Chiyapo, 2013).

### **2.9.2 Projects Abroad**

#### ***2.9.2.1 Background***

Projects Abroad is a well-known international volunteer organisation that was started in the United Kingdom in 1992 by a geography teacher Peter Slowe (Projects Abroad, 2014). Slowe was approached by a group of his students seeking to travel outside of the UK after they had completed high school (Projects Abroad, 2014). The act of taking time out after studying is now known as taking a “gap year” (Projects Abroad, 2014). Projects Abroad expanded from a small “family run business” to a large registered private company in England that offers over 100 placements in five continents (ibid). The organisation has more than 26 destinations and volunteers can choose from various fields such as childcare, teaching, journalism, building, surfing, animal care, conservation and law. The director of the Projects Abroad South African office explained that it was established in Cape Town in 2007 and has been expanding its project offering ever since (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12). Projects Abroad South Africa has a Head Office and several project offices in Cape Town.

### **2.9.2.2 Operations and Projects**

#### **a) Recruitment**

Projects Abroad is divided into two types of offices, one being ‘Operations’ and the other ‘Recruitment’ (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12). The South African office is an Operations office where volunteers travel to and projects are run. Recruitment offices are largely in the First World countries where the volunteer projects are advertised directly to students at schools and universities. The majority of the volunteers sign up on the website and are matched with a destination or project where their skills can be put to good use (ibid). In a case where a volunteer is unsure about what project they would like to work on, they may be asked to submit a CV to assist in matching the volunteer with an appropriate project for their skillset (ibid).

Volunteers may choose to be involved with a number of different projects depending on the time period that they will be present for. The minimum period for volunteering on the majority of projects is two weeks (Projects Abroad, 2014). The maximum period for volunteering with Projects Abroad in South Africa currently is eight weeks. Volunteers are legally allowed to be in the country on a three month Visitors visa that has been endorsed for volunteer work. This visa may be extended for another three months whilst the volunteer is still in South Africa (Projects Abroad, 2014).

Volunteers pay a fee to Projects Abroad before coming to volunteer in Cape Town. Extracurricular activities are funded by the volunteer separately. The average cost for an eight week volunteer project in Cape Town is approximately US\$5500 (Projects Abroad, 2014). The fee covers accommodation, food, travel and medical insurance, transport, support from Projects Abroad staff members as well as transport (Projects Abroad, 2014).

#### **b) Host families**

The volunteers are placed with host families when they arrive in Cape Town. In some cases volunteers may have family in Cape Town or may be older in age and prefer to make alternate accommodation arrangements (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12). The host families may accommodate between two to four volunteers at a time (ibid). The host families are typically working class families that are there to provide three meals a day

and shelter for the volunteer. They are also there to provide much needed context for international volunteers (ibid). Host families receive a stipend from Projects Abroad to cover some of the costs incurred (ibid). Projects Abroad SA currently has 30 host families that accommodate volunteers in Cape Town. A dedicated staff member acts as a middleman to manage relationships between the volunteers and host families (ibid).

### c) Training

The volunteer undergoes a brief induction training at the Projects Abroad Head Office as soon as they arrive. This training includes information on Cape Town, volunteer responsibilities, safety and disciplinary procedures (Projects Abroad South Africa, 2013). A more detailed training takes place at their specific project office. This training provides the volunteer with in-depth information of the specific community they will be volunteering in. The volunteer is informed about the needs of that community; what to expect when they arrive there; how they should conduct themselves as a volunteer and whether there are any rules or guidelines from the host organisation that they need to be aware of. However the researcher noted that Projects Abroad volunteers arrive haphazardly throughout the year. Often this training is summarised and not conducted in much detail as the programme coordinators are often busy or out of the office on project activities.

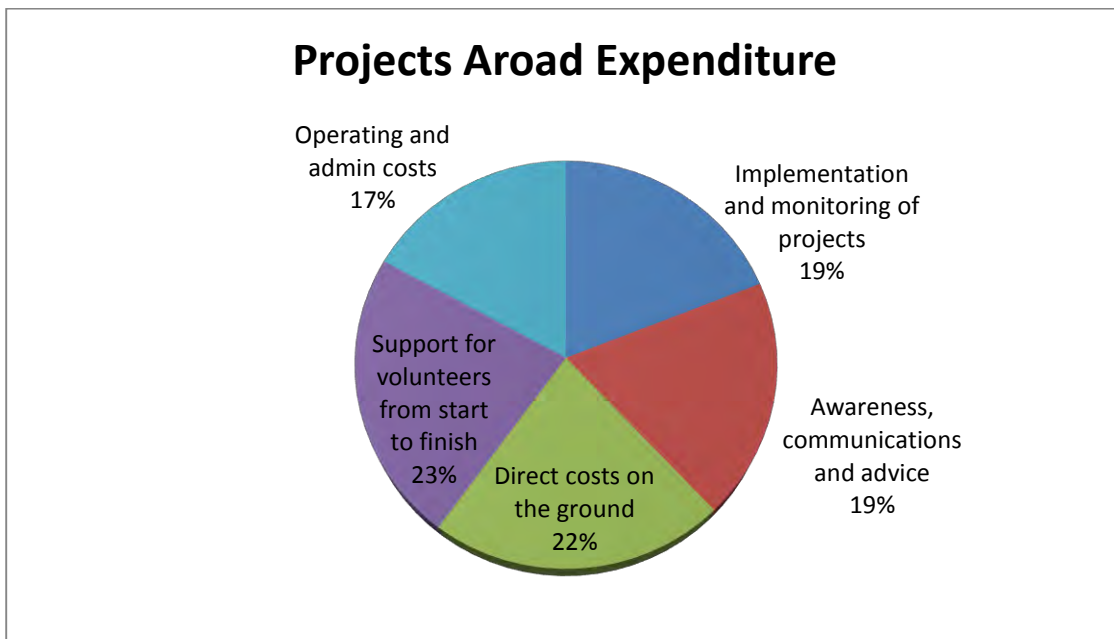
### ***2.9.2.3 Volunteers and Demographics***

Projects Abroad volunteers are between the ages of 16 and 75 (Projects Abroad, 2014). The majority of the volunteers are from the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, Sweden, Australia and the Netherlands (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12). They are predominantly white volunteers from affluent families (ibid).

### ***2.9.2.4 Funding and Partnerships***

Projects Abroad is a private company that requires the volunteers to fund their own trips. Projects Abroad cites the reason for this as the lack of funding from government or other external sources (Projects Abroad, 2014). Nearly 50% of the income is allocated to the “support of volunteers” by staff members in various countries and the “direct costs on the ground” such as accommodation, transport and food (ibid). The remaining 50% is split between “awareness communication and advice”, “operating and administrative costs” and

“the implementation and monitoring of projects” (ibid). The chart below provides more detail on Projects Abroad expenditure.



**Chart 1: Derived from Projects Abroad website (2014)**

Projects Abroad SA has managed to build relationships with smaller organisations for the last seven years (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12). More organisations are sought out to meet particular trends or needs on volunteers’ part. Currently Projects Abroad works with over 70 partner organisations across Cape Town (ibid).

#### **2.9.2.5 PAHRO Project**

The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHRO) is a popular choice amongst volunteers and is one of the Projects Abroad offices that receives a steady stream of volunteers all year round (ibid). The office offers legal services mainly to refugees and runs workshops under their social justice department at prisons, shelters and places of safety in some of Cape Town’s impoverished communities (Projects Abroad South Africa, 2014) The average number of volunteers in the PAHRO office in a month is almost twenty. However this fluctuates as most volunteers travel during their summer holidays (May to September).

The researcher chose to focus on this office because it attracted a number of volunteers from different countries and provided a unique opportunity to interact with a number of host community members. Volunteers under the age of 18 are not allowed to participate in legal service work, instead they organise and facilitate weekly workshops for social justice projects (Projects Abroad South Africa, 2014). The topics for the weekly workshops are determined by the volunteers. The topics may include but are not limited to HIV/ AIDS, human trafficking and bullying. PAHRO has seven different social justice projects that are run every week. The volunteers have a choice of which social justice projects they wish to attend in any given week. There may be a limit in numbers due to transport. PAHRO however tries its utmost best to accommodate each and every volunteer's needs (Solomons, personal communication, 2014 September 19). The volunteers are accompanied by the PAHRO volunteer coordinator on all social justice projects. The researcher chose to be involved with two particular PAHRO projects that work with incarcerated youth in Elsie's River and Kraaifontein.

According to the census statistics of 2011, Elsie's River had an estimated population of just over 90 000, with 86% of the population being Coloured (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Half of the households in this suburb survived on a monthly income of less than R3 200 and 28% of the population that are 20 years and over had completed matric or tertiary education (Statistics South Africa, 2011). In 2011, Kraaifontein suburb had a population of 62 933 with an average household size of 3.51 (ibid). The population of the suburb was 46% White and 42% Coloured (ibid). Just under two thirds of those aged 20 and over had completed matric or tertiary education (ibid).

These projects were chosen by the researcher because they allow the volunteers the most interaction with community members. The researcher was given consent by Projects Abroad to conduct her research within these two projects under PAHRO. The researcher was also granted permission to travel with the volunteers from PAHRO to the project sites twice a week.

## **2.9.3 Coaching for Hope**

### **2.9.3.1 Background**

Coaching for Hope (CFH) is a programme that pursues the goals of sport for development. CFH is run under a development organisation Skillshare International in Botswana and South Africa (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22). Skillshare International operates the Department for International Development (DFID) funded International Citizen Service (ICS) Programme. Skillshare International is one of ten agencies that send out volunteers from the United Kingdom, on the ICS programme around the world (ibid). The ICS programme is coordinated by CFH staff at their country offices in Cape Town. CFH receives two cohorts of volunteers in a year. Each cohort is placed for nine weeks (ibid).

### **2.9.3.2 Operations and Projects**

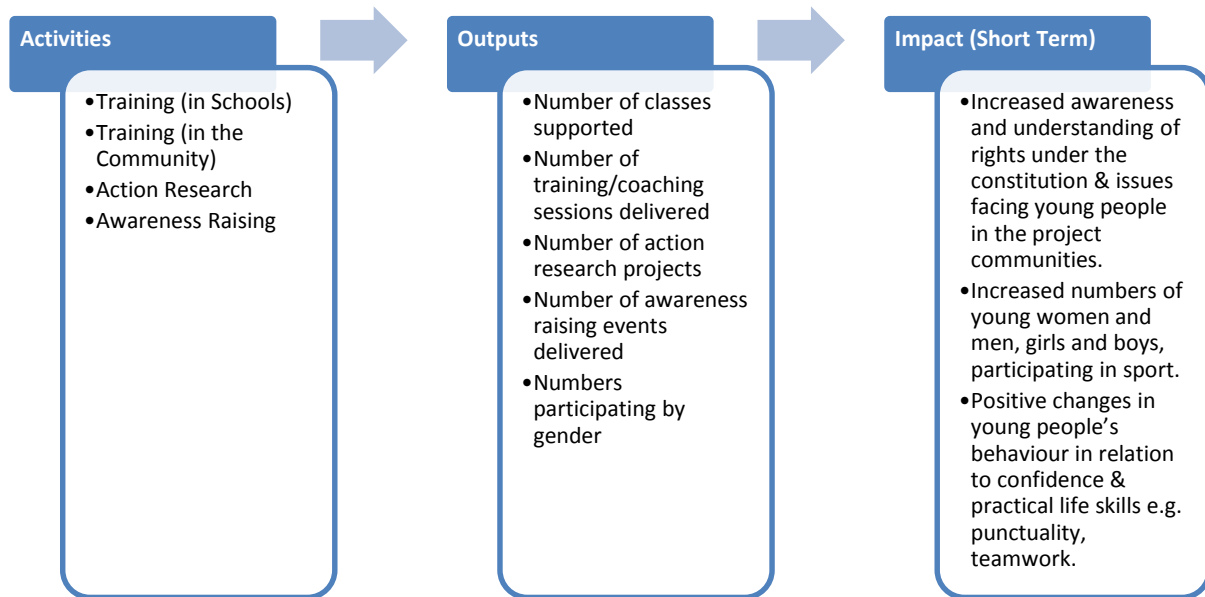
The ICS Programme is entirely UK sponsored and requires UK volunteers to travel all over the world and work in communities with local volunteers. The UK volunteers are invited to apply and then selected after an interview process (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22). In total 21 UK volunteers are selected to pair with 21 South African volunteers.

#### **a) Recruitment**

Currently the ICS programme in South Africa is based in Cape Town therefore this is where local volunteers are sourced (ibid). The majority of local volunteers are already involved with CFH partner organisations in local communities. Coaching for Hope currently works with six organisations in disadvantaged communities in Cape Town. The 42 volunteers are divided into the six organisations. Each project has three or four South African volunteers and three or four UK volunteers. CFH recruits team leaders to oversee the six groups and act as a middleman between the volunteers and the staff at CFH (ibid). The team leaders work with two volunteer cohorts in a year. The team leaders may either be from the UK or South African (ibid). Since the ICS programme is funded by DFID the volunteers do not need to pay to take part in the programme. The UK volunteers are involved in fundraising activities before the leave to raise funds for the projects they will be volunteering for at their respective destinations (ibid). A brief training takes place before they leave the UK, mainly to provide volunteers with information related to their role in the ICS programme (ibid).

## b) Theory of Change

Using sport as a means of development these organisations run programmes that encourage young people to be involved in positive activity such as sport (Skillshare International, 2013). The ICS programme “seeks to develop a generation of young people who will become actively engaged citizens in their communities” (Skillshare International, 2013). Figure 2 below outlines the particular how the programme aims to effect change in practical terms:



**Figure 2: Skillshare International Theory of Change**

**Derived from Skillshare International (2013)**

The ICS programme focuses most on increasing participation of young people in society through in depth engagement (Skillshare International, 2013). This in depth engagement is made possible by having volunteers focusing on one organisation for the duration of their nine week placement in Cape Town.

## c) Homestays

CFH UK volunteers are accommodated in homestays<sup>2</sup> in the actual community they work in (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22). This arrangement is convenient for the volunteers in terms of transport. The South African volunteers are provided with transport money should they live outside the community they work in. Each homestay accommodates

<sup>2</sup> Homestay is a term specifically used by Skillshare International

up to two UK volunteers (ibid). The volunteers work a full day at their community projects from Monday to Friday as well as Saturday mornings. The ICS programme encourages volunteers to integrate with their community as much as possible, for that reason the volunteers are allowed to spend three of their nine weekends taking part in tourist activities (ibid).

#### d) Training

Once they have arrived in South Africa both groups of volunteers go through a week-long induction training. The topics covered include cultural awareness and stereotypes, volunteer responsibilities, homestays and emergency procedures while in South Africa (Coaching for Hope, 2014). The induction training is intended to prepare both the UK volunteers as well as South African volunteers. It is also an opportunity for the two groups to engage on an equal level at the very beginning of the volunteering process (Coaching for Hope, 2014). Furthermore the induction serves the purpose of educating the volunteers about Skillshare's theory of change, as well as the learning outcomes of their volunteering (Coaching for Hope, 2014).

#### ***2.9.3.4 Volunteers and Demographics***

Skillshare UK volunteers are between the ages of 18 and 25. This group consists of mainly students taking a gap year and recent university graduates. Skillshare International conducts national recruitment in the UK. Due to financial constraints CFH is unable to conduct national recruitment in South Africa and so it has limited the recruitment of local volunteers to communities in Cape Town. The South African volunteers are older and they receive a small stipend to cover some of the operational costs incurred while participating in the ICS programme. The South African volunteers are also placed for nine weeks and are permitted to renew their placement when the next cohort of UK volunteers arrives (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22).

#### ***2.9.3.5 OASIS***

As previously mentioned Coaching for Hope has six different CBOs that it partners with. The researcher chose to focus on Oasis an organisation based in Grassy Park. OASIS developed several programmes that make use of sport as a form of development (Skillshare

International, 2014). The ICS volunteers assist mainly with a programme that focuses on young people in schools which aims to “raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and promote sport as a tool for social integration” (Skillshare International, 2014). This project involves the volunteers both local and UK, to be paired with a student who they meet with every day of the week. ICS volunteers primarily spend their working day at OASIS or in the Grassy Park area. OASIS volunteers also reside in the Grassy Park area in homestays.

Grassy Park is a suburb located on the Cape Flats in Cape Town. In 2011 Grassy Park had a population of 19 212 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The average household size was 4.08 with the population being predominantly Coloured (ibid). The suburb had a total unemployment rate of 13.58% (ibid). Due to time and accessibility constraints, the researcher chose this project because it was the easiest to access using public transport. The other six projects were located on the outskirts of Cape Town which would take the researcher a longer time to commute.

#### **2.9.4 Comparison of organisations**

The two organisations selected for this research are very different. Although they are both committed to development through volunteer tourism they take diverse approaches to it. This may be attributed to the fact that Projects Abroad is in essence a private company and Skillshare International is an NGO (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). According to the dimensions of volunteer work as described by Dugid, Mundel & Schugurensky (2013) the organisations have a few things in common. The four dimensions they use to describe volunteer work are “volition, remuneration, structure and intended beneficiaries.” (Dugid, Mundel, & Schugurensky, 2013:19). The volunteers are in no way coerced to volunteer in either of the two organisations. The international volunteers of both organisations are not remunerated for their volunteer work. However when it comes to the structure and intended benefits, the organisations differ slightly. The ICS programme has a relatively strict structure. A CFH programme supervisor explained that the programme is solely focused on benefitting the community first and foremost. Therefore the programme has guidelines to recruit suitable individuals for the work and also remind the students of their purpose once they have been placed:

*“There’s always a question who benefits, and I think a lot of volunteering programmes a lot of volunteers have an awesome time. They get to really see the country but what they actually impacted on the community or the organisation is questionable. It’s questionable let’s leave it at that. I think ICS has tried to focus on the cultural immersion; the exchange there’s strict guidelines to make sure that this is, and strict selection to say this is what volunteering needs to be. It’s really about what can we do for the community, what can we contribute to the communities”* (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22).

Projects Abroad seems to have a semi-formal structure, PAHRO required the volunteers to work as professionals whether they are doing legal work in the office or conducting workshops at social justice projects. Their work requires the volunteers to take on informal tasks (Dugid, Mundel, & Schugurensky, 2013). The authors suggest that having an open recruitment such as Projects Abroad indicates that the volunteer work may equally benefit the volunteer as well as other individuals (ibid). The researcher has drawn up a list comparing the two organisations on various other aspects such the range of projects, funding and programme duration inter alia (See Appendix A).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the literature behind volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism is a complex area of research that has advanced greatly in the last ten years. This research project focuses on three parts (the volunteers, the organisation and communities) of the volunteer tourism equation, and how parts feed into the overall formation of cross-cultural understanding. This chapter has provided a theoretical basis for the discussion on various issues within the volunteer tourism space. The two organisations that have been used as case studies in this research have been discussed in detail in this chapter. The following chapter outlines the methods chosen by the researcher to investigate the role played by VTOs in the formation of cross-cultural understanding.

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used to answer the main research question. It starts by outlining in detail the qualitative approach as the research design then describes sampling and data collection techniques. Validity and data analysis are discussed in this chapter as well as details on ethical issues and limitations with regard to the research.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research was an explorative, qualitative study which aimed to understand the role which sending organisations play in fostering a culture of cross-cultural understanding amongst their volunteers. Exploratory studies are usually used when researchers have found an area of new interest where they can get insight (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Cross-cultural understanding can be described as a niche area of research in volunteer tourism that is relatively under-researched, hence this design was most appropriate.

Qualitative research involves “describing and understanding” specific phenomena (Babbie & Mouton, 2010:53). In order to do this the researcher needs to get the ‘insider’s perspective’ (ibid). Qualitative research helps researchers understand how people behave through their values, perceptions, words and emotions (Punch, 2005). In this case the insiders were the staff members at VTOs, the volunteers and community members. The researcher aimed to fully understand each of the participants’ reality from their point of view while simultaneously understanding the part that VTOs have to play in this reality.

The research used two VTOs as case studies to answer the research question. The research made use of qualitative methods of data collection to understand the participants’ views from their respective perspective. According to Punch (2005:56) qualitative data is mostly in the form of “words, images and records” which provide the qualitative researcher with a wider range of tools.

The combination of an explorative qualitative design was best suited to this research because the aim was to gain insight and understand the role that sending organisations play in the fostering of cross-cultural understanding between host communities and volunteers.

### **3.3 Selection**

The selection procedure for this research project was a two-step process. To begin with, it involved selecting organisations to participate in the research. Once those organisations were selected, interviewees in the form of volunteers, community members and organisational representatives were then selected.

#### **3.3.1 Selection of organisations**

The sampling method that has been chosen for this particular research project is non probability, purposive sampling. According to Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee (2006), this method is used when a sample is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose. There are various organisations that operate within the volunteer tourism sphere in South Africa. This particular research focused on volunteer tourism organisations that have operations in Cape Town. The criteria for selection were on the following:

- The organisation needed to have an office as well as staff that run projects for the organisation in Cape Town
- The organisation must have volunteers that volunteer for periods longer than one month
- The organisation was required to work closely with volunteers throughout the year
- The organisation also needed to have established relationships with organisations in needy communities as well as have running projects in those communities

A list of ten organisations that fit these criteria was drawn up by the researcher. All ten organisations were contacted via email to invite them to participate. Five organisations declined participation citing that they could not accommodate the research for various reasons. Three of the ten organisations were no longer in full operation hence they were excluded on that basis. Two organisations were willing to participate in the research and these were selected. These two organisations were selected on the basis of their large scale operations with more than three different local communities in Cape Town. The two

organisations were heavily invested in the volunteer tourism space working with up to 30 volunteers at any given time.

The researcher made arrangements to meet with the organisational representatives in person to discuss what the research would entail as well as respond to any queries the organisations may have regarding the research.

### **3.3.2 Selection of interviewees**

Purposive sampling was used to select the individual research participants namely organisation representatives, volunteers and community members. This method of sampling is used by researchers when a certain group of individuals are deemed as having appropriate knowledge on a specific subject (David & Sutton, 2004). Volunteers and community members were required to have been involved with volunteer activity with the organisation for a minimum period of one month. Staff from the organisation in charge of recruitment and training of volunteers would be the most suitable persons to interview. They were also required to have been working with volunteers for at least one year. Through observation the researcher was able to identify the community members that work most closely with volunteers and those were selected for the research. Two organisational representatives were interviewed along with two volunteers<sup>3</sup> and two community members for each organisation. Hence the total of the interviewees was 13.

Coaching for Hope works with local and international volunteers, two female UK volunteers and one male South African volunteer<sup>4</sup> were selected. One male community member who works closely with volunteer at OASIS was also selected. The researcher selected these interviewees on the basis of their availability, as some individuals were engaged in other community projects and not necessarily operating from the OASIS office. The UK volunteers had both recently completed their postgraduate studies while the local male volunteer was an older volunteer who worked with OASIS and decided to apply for the ICS programme.

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<sup>3</sup>There was an exception for Coaching for Hope. Three volunteers were selected, two UK volunteers and one South African volunteer.

<sup>4</sup>The local volunteer selected was also a resident of the Grassy Park community

Volunteers from PAHRO were selected on the basis of their regular attendance of social justice projects. The researcher travelled to projects with the volunteers on two occasions in order to ascertain which individuals were most suitable.<sup>5</sup> The same selection criterion was applied for the selection community members. The PAHRO volunteers selected were from Australia and Sweden respectively. They were female both undergraduate students coming to the end of their studies. The two community members were from the youth detention facilities in Elsie's River and Kraaifontein.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The selected research design for this research project is a qualitative explorative one. It followed then that qualitative data collection techniques would be used. Such techniques are used when non-numerical data is being collected (David & Sutton, 2004). Data collection techniques that were used were semi structured interviews, document analysis and observation. All three methods are qualitative means to gathering information. Document analysis and observation were used in the initial stages of the research to provide a background to the organisation and how they operate. Semi-structured interviews swiftly followed in order to gather information directly from participants based on the background information gathered from the former.

#### **3.4.1 Document Analysis**

Document analysis is a process in which documents are interpreted by a researcher to give meaning on a particular topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Documents are regarded as very valuable sources of information (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:99). For this research project the relevant written documents included general information about the organisations, pre-departure information sent to volunteers, training manuals and marketing pamphlets provided insight into each organisation's functions and processes.

The researcher requested these documents from the organisational representatives and proceeded to analyse them. The documents were analysed in the same manner as the

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<sup>5</sup>Projects Abroad volunteers have a choice to attend any project in any given week. Therefore only volunteers that attended consistently were selected.

interview transcripts. This involved thoroughly reading transcripts line by line and identifying codes then eventually emerging themes.<sup>6</sup> These documents were useful in providing a holistic understanding of the organisations and their corresponding programme operations.

### **3.4.2 Observation**

Observation is a method that is widely used in the social sciences to allow researchers to gain a sense of the participants' reality (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As a research method observation is useful because the researcher can use this time to prepare preliminary questions for further research. Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004:82) indicate that observation may involve participating with the participants in their setting enabling them to become familiar with practices in that particular setting. The researcher conducted observation of PAHRO volunteers at their community projects in Elsie's River and Kraaifontein and with CFH volunteers at the community project in Grassy Park. In the case of PAHRO volunteers the researcher would travel with the volunteers which afforded her the opportunity to observe for at least 45 minutes each way. In addition to observing the volunteers working in communities the researcher was invited to attend a Coaching for Hope full day training workshop on community mobilisation. This also provided much insight into the programme objectives as well as interaction between UK and South African volunteers.

The researcher became a participating observer on a number of occasions. Babbie & Mouton (2010) outline that the researcher is observing a particular group while simultaneously acting as a group member. The researcher however made the participants aware that she was indeed a researcher. The period of observation lasted approximately two months. In total the researcher conducted sixteen hours of observation with each organisation. The researcher was able to gain deeper insight into the level of interaction between the volunteers as a group as well as volunteers with community members. The researcher often listened to conversations that would take place while travelling from PAHRO to the social justice projects and back. In addition the researcher observed non-verbal communication and behaviour of individuals.

Babbie & Mouton (2010) mention the difficulty of playing a dual role of participant and observer. The researcher found it difficult to blend in with the group at first with both

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<sup>6</sup>See Data Analysis section (3.4) for a detailed account of analysis procedures using Miles and Huberman approach.

organisations. This is mainly because the researcher may have been considered an outsider by the community. Researchers conducting cross-cultural research are likely to be perceived as an outsider in the preliminary stages of the research process (Liamputtong, 2010). In the case of Projects Abroad where there are no local volunteers, the researcher was an obvious outsider due to her race. The researcher anticipated that this would in effect result in immense curiosity about her position within the volunteer group. By the third week of observation, the community had familiarised themselves with the researcher and were comfortable with her presence in the group. The researcher noted down particular volunteer activities, specific brief conversations with some community members, as well as the overall interaction between individual volunteers and individual community members. The researcher took these field notes on each occasion which were used in the analysis stage of the research process. Denzin (as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2010) summarizes the different types of data to be observed during observation. This includes a person's physicality, their body language, mannerisms and duration of their actions (ibid).

### **3.4.3 Interviews**

The researcher chose qualitative interviews because their ontology is that social reality can be understood through people's experiences, views, values and insights (Mason, 2002:63). In depth interviews allow for face to face interaction and clarity on key concepts and themes (Punch, 2005). Face to face interviews provide the interviewer with more flexibility with the use of open ended questions (David & Sutton, 2004). David & Sutton (2004:81) suggest that making use of more open ended data collection techniques edifies the integrity of the data by allowing the interviewee to speak freely without their voice being distorted. Therefore in order to gain a precise 'insider perspective' (Babbie & Mouton, 2010) it was necessary to have face to face interaction with the sending organisations' representatives in Cape Town as well as with volunteers and community members.

An interview schedule with a set of pre-determined, semi structured questions was prepared to guide the interview. Observation sessions provided some content for the researcher to enquire about during the interviews. All participants gave consent to their interviews being recorded. The recording of the interviews was solely for the purpose of transcription for data analysis. The participants were given a briefing of the research, including its aims and potential benefits. They were informed that they needed to consent to participating in the

study and could withdraw at any time. After the interview the researcher asked the participants if they wanted to add anything or had any questions to ask. Babbie & Mouton, (2010) highlight that in-depth interviews are best suited to experienced researchers that can make use of a range of skills. The researcher used a variety of interviewing techniques including prompting, furthering and clarification.

The researcher was aware of her position of power. With both organisations the researcher was introduced to the volunteers by the volunteer coordinator as a student from UCT. Research has shown that affiliation with an academic institution has an impact on how a researcher is viewed by research participants (Liamputtong, 2010). UCT is a well-known academic institution and held in high esteem by most international students. This aspect worked in the researcher's favour as it made gaining access much simpler. The researcher found that when speaking to international volunteers, she was regarded as an equal. Gaining access to the community members was not as simple for the researcher as they immediately questioned her presence. The researcher on one occasion was able to legitimise her presence by conversing in Xhosa with some of the community members. Liamputtong (2010) outlines language as a key aspect in gaining access when conducting cross-cultural research.

The main difficulty the researcher found with regard to the face to face interviews was the issue of time. This time consuming nature of such interviews has been cited to be one of the techniques' major disadvantage (David & Sutton, 2004). The interviews required at least one hour for each interviewee. It was often difficult for volunteers to take an hour out of their work to speak to the researcher. The researcher tried to make the best use of the time that she was afforded. It was also important to the researcher that the interviewee was comfortable; as a result all interviews were conducted in a private space away from other volunteers or staff members. The researcher was cognisant of the fact that the setting of the interview is very important in maintaining the integrity of the research (David & Sutton, 2004).

#### ***3.4.3.1 Interview Schedule***

Three separate interview schedules were prepared for the three groups (See Appendix B). All interviews were conducted in English. The questions were divided into three sections. The first section was dedicated to background information of the interviewee, such as their identifying information. This section was quite similar for all three groups. The second

section pertained to the work that the individual does with the community/ with volunteers as applicable to the three groups. In this section the interview schedule for the organisation delved into more detail about the operations and some of the logistical elements of the organisation. The last section included questions about the unique role of the organisation in creating and sustaining firstly, a relationship between the volunteers and community members.

#### **3.3.4 Validity**

“Validity refers to the credibility of our interpretations” (Silverman, 2013:285). Validity is an important aspect in qualitative research as it refers to the overall truth of the research. In qualitative research validity may also refer to whether the selection of certain methods has investigated what was meant to be investigated thoroughly (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:147). One of the ways to ensure validity is triangulation. For this particular study, methodological triangulation has been used. This involves the use of different methods during the process of data collection (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). The researcher made use of in-depth interviews, document analysis and observation as a means of methodological triangulation. The researcher made use of the notes made during observation in the analysis. This enabled the researcher to gain a holistic perspective of the data and enhance the validity of the data.

#### **3.3.5 Transcription**

All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed into text by the researcher. Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004:76) suggest that the data be transcribed almost immediately. Furthermore these authors suggest that the researcher should transcribe as much of the data as they can on their own.

The researcher transcribed every word from the recording straight after each interview. The researcher took care not to remove any words from the recording which could ultimately change the meaning. Poland (2002:641) suggests that researchers must pay special attention to maintaining the quality of the transcript. Therefore transcripts should not be made to “sound better” by removing certain words and expressions when transcribing to text. Poland (2002:641) encourages researchers to note when pauses take places, overlapping speech; emphasis placed on certain words; held sounds as well as paraphrasing others. The researcher noted all these aspects and recorded them with the use of memos in NVivo

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data in this research project was mainly in the form of text. This text included interview transcripts as well as documents sourced from the organisation to provide context. After the data was collected, it was transcribed by the researcher and uploaded onto a data analysis software programme, NVivo. The use of computer aided qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo for data analysis simplifies the process of coding and connecting emerging patterns (David & Sutton, 2004). It allows for the storage of huge amounts of data in one place which is convenient for the researcher (ibid). Miles and Huberman's approach of data analysis was used to analyse the data. Miles & Huberman (1994 as cited in Punch 2005) identify three major phases of data analysis. These are data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions (Punch, 2005:197).

Data reduction involves editing and summarizing the data as a whole in a way that it makes the data more manageable for the researcher to use. The first step is to read through all the transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of each one. This is the stage where coding also takes place. Codes are defined by Punch (2005:199) as "tags, names, labels". Coding therefore is the process of assigning these tags to the corresponding relevant data. Codes are also a way of indexing the data for easy retrieval (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Punch, 1994). The researcher was able to develop codes from the operationalized objectives<sup>7</sup> before data analysis. The researcher however kept an open mind when analysing the transcripts. The international bestselling book *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Johnny Saldana (2009:4) mentions that the codes at the data reduction stage are termed "initial codes". Once a code was identified a definition was attached to it in order to ensure that all other codes under the same name have the same description.

The second level of analysis is data display. It enables the data to be "organised and compressed and then displayed through the use of graphs, tables or charts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Punch, 1994). By organising the data in this way Miles & Huberman as cited in David & Sutton (2004:207) suggest that having a "think display" makes the data more presentable to make analysis easier. Data displays allow the researcher to start making the connections between the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Punch, 1994).

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<sup>7</sup>Section 1.4 of Chapter One presents the operationalized objectives derived from Raymond (2007).

The connections that were identified at this stage of data analysis were constituted to form the main findings in Chapter Four of this dissertation. At this stage patterns or themes may start to emerge. Saldana (2009:13) distinguishes a theme as the “outcome” of the coding process. Themes may be developed at this stage through “higher level codes” which are more refined versions of the initial codes from the first stage of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Punch, 1994).

The last stage of data analysis process is drawing and verifying conclusions. This stage provides the researcher with the opportunity to test whether the meanings emerging from the data are true. CAQDAS made this stage simple for the researcher since all the codes and patterns are available and connected to particular examples in the data.

Each organisation was analysed separately to ensure that the data is not compromised. The process of data analysis required several weeks and extreme concentration from the researcher.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

As researchers we need to be accountable for the work that we do by ensuring that we adhere to an ethical code of conduct and professionalism (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As a Development Studies student at the University of Cape Town the researcher adhered to the Ethics policy by the Faculty of Humanities<sup>8</sup>. The issues that the researcher dealt with are outlined below.

#### **3.6.1 Informed Consent**

One of the most important aspects of ethical research is informing research participants about the “purpose, methods, the uses of research and potential risks of their participation” (Silverman, 2013:162). The researcher ensured that the participants were informed about all these aspects through the use a consent form. The researcher obtained consent from each participant by asking them to sign a consent form. The consent form used in this research can be found in the Appendices (Appendix C). Their permission was sought to record all

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<sup>8</sup>Ethics clearance was sought and granted by the Ethics Committee in the Sociology Department as stipulated the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Guidelines document pertaining to research with human participants.

interviews for research purposes only. The researcher's introduction to the participants was usually through an individual in a position of power. The researcher was aware of this and made a conscious effort to inform the participants that they were under no obligation to participate if they did not wish to do so. The participants were insured that their information would be used for the purposes of research only.

### **3.6.2 Avoidance of Harm**

Throughout the research process, the researcher ensured that the participants were not harmed in any way. The respondents were not asked questions that made them uncomfortable in any way. An interview schedule with relevant questions was used for the interviews. The researcher explained to the participants that if they were not obliged to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with.

### **3.6.3 Confidentiality**

The responses from the respondents were handled in a confidential manner to ensure that their privacy is not infringed upon (Punch, 2009). The respondents' real names were replaced with pseudonyms in all of the transcripts. The names were changed in a way that did not impact on the integrity of the research. All recorded interviews and transcript were stored in a secure place.

## **3.7 Limitations to the Research**

The researcher is aware that there are some limitations related to the methodological framework of this research project.

### **3.7.1 Time**

Firstly the issue of time was a serious concern for the researcher. Face to face interviewees limited the number of interviewees that the researcher could work in the time frame that she had set. The issue of time is also apparent when it came to data analysis. This is because in comparison to quantitative data, qualitative data is relatively unstructured and requires more organisation before it can be analysed. The data analysis stage of the research required the researcher's full attention and commitment. All 13 interviews were transcribed and analysed

simultaneously over a period of four months. An increase in the sample size would have also led to an extended period of analysis.

### **3.7.2 Access**

Another issue was that of access. The research scope was limited to Cape Town this was mainly because the researcher was using public transport as the mode of transportation. It was therefore important to find organisations that were easily accessible. This may have excluded other organisations from being selected by the mere nature of them being too far out of Cape Town for the researcher to access.

### **3.7.3 Race and language**

The researcher was able to legitimise her position by conversing in basic Xhosa with community members particularly at the PAHRO projects. The data was however collected in English and this may have been a limitation since most of the community members were not first language English speakers. This may have resulted in some community members probably not expressing themselves as well as they could have in a more familiar language. Furthermore the perception the community members have of the researcher as a black female from UCT may have influenced the way that they responded. This may have resulted in a social desirability bias in which the interviewees give an answer that they feel the interviewer wants to hear (Collins, Shattell & Thomas, 2005). However methodological triangulation was used to curb this bias.

### **3.7.4 Selection**

The selection method chosen for this research project is another limitation that can be identified. The individuals were selected mainly on the basis of their availability and accessibility. This may result in a sampling bias, as the individuals chosen may not accurately represent the group's views.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter provided detail into how the researcher went about gathering and processing the information required to address the main research question. It also presented some of the limitations and ethical considerations of the research. The following chapter starts to discuss the findings of the research conducted. The findings of this research are unique to the two organisations involved. The findings are however relevant because they provide insight into an area that is under researched in South Africa as well as in the field of volunteer tourism as a whole. The following chapter presents the research findings as they arose after the process of data analysis.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from research that have been organised into themes. The themes have been drawn from the qualitative analysis stage in order to answer the main research question. This chapter explores the main themes that emerged after data analysis:

- The organisational commitment shown with regard to cross-cultural understanding
- The preparation of volunteers by the organisation
- The continuity and duration of the volunteer programmes of both organisations
- The level of experiential learning and exchange between volunteers and community members

### 4.2 Organisational commitment

In order to understand how organisations facilitate cross-cultural understanding it is important to take a look at the organisations' core goals and mission. The two organisations have different aims and objectives which definitely impacts on their approach to facilitating cross-cultural understanding. This section outlines three aspects of organisational commitment namely volunteer recruitment and diversity; organisational engagement with the community and the commitment of staff members.

#### 4.2.1 Volunteer recruitment and diversity

The Projects Abroad recruitment offices are located in the First World countries. The volunteer has the ability to choose any project in any country. This is mainly because they are able to afford the opportunity (Guttentag, 2009). A volunteer advisor may request a CV from the volunteer should they be unsure what sort of project they would be best suited for. The researcher observed that the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office consisted of mainly law students looking for practical experience. Raymond (2007) suggests that some fields of

volunteering require a volunteer to possess a certain skill or experience in order for the programme to run effectively. Several studies have found that the absence of skills in volunteering has disastrous results (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2010).

Coaching for Hope (CFH) as a programme, is an implementing partner for the Department for International Development (DFID) funded ICS programme. The programme undertakes a rigorous selection process<sup>9</sup> to ensure that suitable candidates are chosen. A programme supervisor at CFH explains the criteria on which selection is based. The criteria include qualities that recognise the needs of the community:

*“There are selection days where volunteers are put through all kind of activity to see if they meet the criteria because we have seven dimensions that we recruit volunteers by which involves adaptability, sensitivity to the feelings of others, some form of self-assurance, it doesn’t have to be very confident and a commitment to learning”*  
(Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22)

In addition CFH is committed to active citizenship in communities. In order to fulfill this mandate effectively the programme pairs a South African volunteer with a UK volunteer. Raymond (2007) mentions the issue of diversity in the volunteer group as a factor that may encourage cross-cultural understanding within the volunteer group. The programme supervisor explained the reason behind pairing as a means to stimulate understanding between the two groups:

*“...We like to do that in a one to one ratio so that one volunteer actually has a buddy to actually be grouped up with. Obviously to stimulate cultural awareness but also to stimulate understanding of, cultural awareness cos language can also be a problem,, but also to stimulate exchange between UK and South African volunteers...”*  
(Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22)

In this way volunteers are able to learn from one another in a way that best utilises their strengths. The CFH programme supervisor mentioned that both South African and UK

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<sup>9</sup>Coaching for Hope selection process previously mentioned in Chapter Two, Section 2.8.3.2

volunteers come from very different backgrounds but still have a meaningful contribution to make towards understanding one another.

Lillian (Projects Abroad volunteer), had been volunteering with the organisation for just over six weeks and she felt that in order to have a better understanding between the community members and the volunteers, local volunteers should be included:

*“I think what I would suggest is working maybe with a group or mentors, from South Africa as well. Just because I sometimes feel like having volunteers from international areas might be a little bit hard for the people we are working with to relate to and so I would like them to possibly work on that” –Lillian, PA*

In addition to pairing volunteers, Coaching for Hope also emphasises the importance of the use of spare time to volunteers. Maintaining a balance between volunteer work and tourist activity is important in volunteer tourism. In a study of volunteering in Mexico, Tomazos & Butler (2011) found that volunteers struggled to maintain a balance between work and play which raised important questions about their management by the organisation. Tomazos & Butler (2011) suggest that it is worthwhile for organisations to pay attention to volunteers’ daily activities in order to maximise their commitment.

Projects Abroad has been established as an organisation that is committed to development and also focuses on the experience of the volunteer. As an organisation they believe in changing the lives of those that are part of their volunteer programme especially the younger generation. This idea was elaborated on by the Projects Abroad director, who felt that the organisation had a duty to help volunteers become socially responsible individuals in their own communities in their home countries (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12).

The organisations are both committed to social development however one is focused on the community in relation to the volunteer’s overall experience and the other on the community and the change that can be effected through established partnerships within that community. The organisations therefore use diverse channels to facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

#### 4.2.2 Organisational engagement with the community

Post-development scholars such as Escobar (1992) advocate the inclusion of local knowledge in development. Coaching for Hope's ICS programme values the input of the community. An essential part of the programme is working with local volunteers that are familiar with the issues and challenges that the community is faced with on a daily basis. This is often the knowledge that outside volunteers may not possess (Simpson, 2004). CFH programme supervisor shed some light on this issue:

*“So we are working with volunteers out of the community, one because they know the community, they know the needs of the community. There's easier transition, exchange between volunteers but also because we reach out to our partner organisation to actually recruit these volunteers.”* (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22)

The outside volunteers are in many ways building on the already existing capitals that exist in the community. This was found by Zahra & McGehee (2013) in their work assessing how volunteer tourism contributes to community capital. They found that volunteers act as a bridge between the organisation and the community and in many ways create social bonds that support the community (ibid).

Guttentag (2009) discussed how the presence of volunteers may result in the displacement of local volunteers or staff members. The ICS programme exists only to support the existing structures of their partner organisations and not to replace them:

*“We work specifically with partner organisations because partner organisations address a specific need in the community. They have already existing programmes that volunteers can align to. ICS is not a separate programme, the ICS volunteers are strengthening, capacitating the partner organisations in their existing programmes activities.”* (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22).

Community engagement is an important aspect of programme design in volunteer tourism. A key aspect of the Fair Trade Learning (FTL) standards<sup>10</sup> by Fair Trade is the focus on community engagement in volunteer tourism. One of the core principles elaborates on ‘community voice and direction’ which elaborates on the importance of volunteer projects being ‘community driven’, always putting community needs first (Hartman, Paris & Blache-Cohen, 2014). Another principle focuses on ensuring that local needs are met using resources within the community (ibid). Coaching for Hope focuses on supporting the partner organisation by working with local volunteers that are involved these organisations. In this way the needs of the community are not undermined or excluded which is often a concern with volunteer tourism projects (Palacios, 2010).

#### **4.2.3 Staff commitment**

In her framework of good practice in volunteer tourism, Raymond (2007) mentions the role of the staff members of an organisation. In particular the contribution of a volunteer coordinator is paramount to effective programme coordination. Both Projects Abroad and Coaching for Hope have dedicated staff members that work very closely with the volunteers. The volunteer coordinator acts as the middleman between the volunteers and the community, having both groups’ interests at heart (Raymond, 2007).

Coaching for Hope recruits team leaders that are placed in communities with the volunteers. These team leaders then develop a thorough understanding of the issues on the ground that volunteers as well as the community members are dealing with.

A PAHRO volunteer coordinator indicated the love for his job. He described situations where he has conducted workshops at social justice alone. Raymond (2007) reiterates that the value of a staff member lies in their ability to inspire volunteers to do their work with passion:

*“There’s even times where I go to projects on my own and I’ll tell them also I’m not like the other staff members who’ll be like: ‘Hey you have to go, you have to go’. This is your experience you know, this is my experience as well, I want to help so I go, Projects Abroad is my support and my work. So whether I’m going to go with you or without you, I want to do this, this is what I wanna do. By me doing that I’m hoping*

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<sup>10</sup> This was previously mentioned in Section 2.5 of this dissertation.

*that I show them actually the eager for me to really work with these people so that they can also receive it.” (Solomons, personal communication, 2014 September 18).*

During observation sessions, it became very apparent that the Projects Abroad volunteer coordinator was highly regarded by the community members and the volunteers. One community member, Sarah had the following to say about the volunteer coordinator:

*“I really like it when he comes here, he has so much energy and he really understands us and tries to make us laugh. This project would definitely not be the same without him”–Sarah, PA*

Another community member highlighted the issue of language. The majority of PAHRO community members are first language Afrikaans speakers. The researcher observed that language played a huge role in the building of a relationship. Language in some ways legitimises the presence of an ‘outsider’ in a group (Liamputtong, 2010). The researcher noted that volunteers would play games or conduct workshops with community members in English. The volunteer coordinator would step in to translate or reiterate what had been said in Afrikaans. The community members seemed to appreciate this and would often respond to the coordinator in Afrikaans.

The presence of volunteer coordinators that are familiar with needs on either side is valuable. These individuals are essentially the face of the organisation. Therefore their role is also important in the investigation of organisations fostering cross-cultural understanding.

### **4.3 Preparation of volunteers**

Raymond (2007) outlines the importance of adequately preparing volunteers as an essential step in any successful volunteer project. Preparation involves providing accurate information on the country, the programme and the communities they will be working in (Raymond, 2006). Dugid, Mundel, & Schugurensky (2013:68) describe volunteer training to include three essential aspects:

- Giving background on the organisation
- Outlining the volunteer’s duties and responsibilities

- Continuous on-the-job training

Furthermore they highlight that training and learning activities are vital in order for volunteer tourism programmes to succeed (ibid).

Projects Abroad and Coaching for Hope both conduct in-country training when the volunteers arrive. The researcher was given access to training material by both organisations. Projects Abroad's training was focused on providing the volunteer with contextual information on South Africa however it did not provide sufficient information on the actual communities that the projects would take place. The induction focused mainly on the volunteer's responsibilities and duties. There was very little information given on specific social justice projects.

During observation sessions with PAHRO volunteers, the researcher established that volunteers did not have sufficient information on particular communities. Volunteers asked questions relating to the situations the community members were facing, after project visits. Furthermore weekly presentations were often devoid of context specific information. For instance in one observation session the researcher noted that the volunteer presenting indicated that ARVs were very expensive and inaccessible when they are in fact free at government clinics and hospitals across South Africa. This was pointed out to the volunteer after the presentation by a staff member.

Projects Abroad indicated that training is focused on providing volunteers with the correct ways of doing things:

*“Well in the induction process here they visit each staff member and I would explain to them how things happen in the facility, what not to wear, what not to do and things like that.”* (Solomons, personal interview, 2014 September 18)

The researcher reviewed the training manual and found that most of the information was related to the 'do's and don'ts' of becoming a volunteer. Information pertaining to specific projects was lacking.

Coaching for Hope volunteers are involved in a week long pre-placement training when they arrive in South Africa. The training is aimed at helping the volunteers to best carry out their work having been equipped with the most relevant information. The CFH training covers topics such as stereotypes and working the different cultures. These are the very first stages of starting to understand cross-cultural understanding (Raymond, 2007). In addition to pre-placement training, CFH undertakes several workshops to enhance engagement between South African and UK volunteers. The researcher observed that the training provided an opportunity for the volunteers to engage with one another as equals, sharing opinions and disagreeing with one another. The volunteers were equally vocal about community issues, highlighting the passion for the work they do.

Training is an important aspect for any volunteer as it prepares them for their role (Williams, 2001). Inadequate preparation may have unintended consequences that affect the overall effectiveness of volunteer tourism programmes (Guttentag, 2009).

#### **4.4 Continuity and Duration of the Programme**

Continuity and the period of service have come up as prominent themes in this research. Lough (2010:459) found that the volunteering duration has a significant impact on the formation of inter-cultural competence. He found that interaction between volunteers and communities over a long period of time increases inter-cultural competence.

Projects Abroad and Coaching for Hope differ in the way that their programmes are structured. The ICS programme under Coaching for Hope is a structured nine week volunteer placement programme. The volunteers spend the majority of their placement in the community. This is significantly different from the open programme run by Projects Abroad, where volunteers are able to travel to Cape Town at any time of the year for a period best suited to them. The openness of this programme is seen as a challenge for planning but also impacts the community in which the organisation works. This also hinders the formation of relationships since volunteers are due to leave after a short stay:

*... I then must explain to the volunteers in the induction that they shouldn't create bonds or close relationships with any of the kids at the project because you're*

*gonna leave, you gonna become hope for them and then the hope is gone. You make the situation worse...*” (Solomons, personal communication, 2014 September 18)

A PAHRO volunteer also shared the same sentiments on the issue of consistency and building relationships with community members. Projects Abroad PAHRO volunteers spend the bulk of their day in the office. Their time is split between social justice projects and legal work.<sup>11</sup> Social justice projects are an hour long and split over different days of the week. Once PAHRO volunteers arrive at the social justice projects for the very first time they introduce themselves and mention the duration of their stay in Cape Town. A PAHRO community member Sarah voiced her concern about some of the volunteers’ short stays:

*“I would like it if the volunteers could stay longer cos sometimes you miss one or two weeks then you hear ‘oh so and so is gone already’. Sometimes you never even know they are going you know.”*–Sarah, PA

Lillian shares her experience on visiting women’s shelters every week and getting to know the women better:

*“Umm, yeah I think so well it is a little bit hard, even when you’re here for a while it is quite short the time goes by so quickly and you’re so busy you can’t always go to the social justice things when you want to but I think so, especially with some of the women’s shelters, because we go there so consistently. I go every week but I have managed to go most weeks. Some women come back most weeks so you get to know their faces and they kinda get to know you”* –Lillian, PA

A UK volunteer with Coaching for Hope Vee, reflects on working with community member that she was partnered with for nine weeks. She mentions that it has led to the formation of a good relationship which she is proud of:

*“...like the boys we work with, we are partnered up and he just got back into school and he used to be so shy and the other day he just said a joke in front of everyone like*

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<sup>11</sup>As previously mentioned PAHRO volunteers can only conduct legal work if they are over 18 years of age. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.8.5

*that for me now is my achievement... Before he would just answer everything with one word answers and now we've been working, for ages, together and now slowly we've built a relationship" –Vee, CFH*

It is apparent that building a relationship is quite dependant on a volunteer being present consistently over a certain period. Through careful observation and interviews with Canadian volunteers in Costa Rica, Zavitz & Butz (2011) found that short-term volunteering contributes very little to cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and community members. Zavitz & Butz (2011) argued that placements of two weeks or less was insufficient for a meaningful relationship to be formed. Therefore it becomes more difficult for cross-cultural understanding to take place without the foundation of a relationship. The research however was based on seven two hour interviews at the beginning and at the end of the placement it is possible that there will have been some contribution after the volunteers had left.

## **4.5 Experiential Learning and Exchange**

Experiential learning and exchange is a key part of Raymond's (2007) framework. It is important in volunteer tourism because it encourages reciprocity and reflection in volunteer tourism activity (Raymond, 2007). This section discusses how experiential learning takes place through individual reflection of volunteer activities and how exchange is facilitated through learning and host families.

### **4.5.1 Experiential Learning through reflection**

Reflection in volunteer tourism programmes has been found to have an impact on increasing awareness for the volunteer (Hammersley, 2013). As a means of good practice in volunteer tourism Raymond (2007) suggests that organisations should encourage volunteers to keep journals. These journals contain a detailed account of the work that the volunteer is involved in as well as their ideas of how they feel their work impacts others (Raymond, 2007:10).

The ICS programme requires the volunteers to write out weekly activity report sheets. These provide some insight into the practical activities that the volunteer has been involved in (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22). In addition the volunteers are

required to write out case studies, reflecting on their experience as volunteers in the community. Projects Abroad on the other hand developed an online portal for volunteers to journal their events on a weekly basis (Projects Abroad, 2014). The volunteer is free to discuss whatever they would like. It is also open to anyone on the internet to read. The researcher noted that the journal entries are also used as a promotional tool to attract potential volunteers via the internet. This is problematic because volunteers may feel pressured to present the organisation as well as their experience in a positive light. Furthermore volunteers may resist the urge to be particularly introspective as the journals are open to anyone who would like to read them. This ultimately compromises the online journals' authenticity as they are unlikely to be a true reflection of how the volunteer truly feels.

The approaches used by both organisations allow the volunteers to start thinking about their role in relation to others; however it is a higher level of reflection that is needed. To this regard Palacios (2010) notes that cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and communities is likely to occur when there is critical reflection of one's work.

#### **4.5.2 Exchange through Learning**

Raymond (2007) suggests that experiential learning is an essential part of volunteering that should be encouraged by organisations. Coaching for Hope is committed to active citizenship but also believes that this is achieved by encouraging volunteers to reflect frequently on their experience. The organisation has specific training days in which much of this reflective activity takes place.

The researcher was fortunate to be able to attend and observe one of these training days. The volunteers were divided into their six community groups. Each group consisted of six UK volunteers and six South African volunteers each headed by one UK and one South African team leader. The groups brainstormed ideas on how best to tackle the needs in their communities. This experience provides each volunteer with the platform to share their ideas openly and honestly. When asked about this experience a South African volunteer John remarked how it had impacted greatly on his confidence interacting with people from other cultures.

*“I love it, man it inspires me cos sometimes us Coloured guys we feel like we can’t speak to these white UK volunteers, cos they are more highly than us, but come to think of it their culture is more the same than us, there’s nothing wrong. It made me stronger actually, cos I can go to any place and just pick up a conversation with anyone and that’s amazing” –John, CFH*

The researcher observed that during the break the volunteers were almost all sitting in mixed groups that did not entirely consist of UK volunteers or South African volunteers only. The volunteers sat in groups on the basis of their projects.

The exchange that takes place within Coaching for Hope differs from Projects Abroad because it is among the volunteers themselves. South African and UK volunteers are able to reflect on their experience and learn from one another.

The Projects Abroad volunteer coordinator mentioned in his interview that he was travelling to the Projects Abroad Human Rights office in Argentina as a form of exchange. He highlighted that he would be travelling to understand how they conduct their programmes in that office. He also mentioned that it would enhance his understanding of how volunteers feel when they arrive in South Africa for the first time.

*“...I’m actually going to Argentina next month to learn from the office over there, like how they do things. Just for a week because they work in similar facilities like we do here. I just have to go to exchange to see what they do in their facilities there and see what I can implement, what I can take from there and also different cultures. And I’m also going there for a culture shock just to know what the volunteers go through before they come here or get here.” (Solomons, personal communication, 2014 September 18)*

The two organisations interpret the idea of experiential learning in very different ways. Coaching for Hope focuses on inter-learning activities to enhance understanding between the UK and South African volunteers during reflective exercises on training days. Projects Abroad on the other hand facilitates exchange on a macro level with a staff member travelling abroad to learn from other offices that work with similar communities.

### 4.5.3 Host families

Host families form part of the experiential learning process for volunteers. In a study that used self-reported responses from volunteers, Lough (2010:460) found that there is a strong relationship between cultural reciprocity and inter-cultural competence. Lough (2010) found that volunteers were more likely to have their goals shaped by the communities in which they live, especially when they live with host families.

The research shows that host families stand to gain by interacting with a different cultural group. Both organisations reported finding the host families learn new things from international volunteers living in their homes. CFH believes that this is also central to some form of cultural exchange:

*“We are always busy looking for good host families, where either one or two volunteers are hosted throughout their nine week placement in community... Again it’s on to this cultural awareness, exchange, this learning of the culture. What we hear from certain homestays is that they are learning a lot from UK volunteers as well so it’s definitely an exchange there as well and that really contributes and stimulates integration and learning of the country.”* (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22).

Projects Abroad shares the same sentiments on host families providing more than just daily sustenance:

*“Host families provide three meals a day but they are really there to provide a cultural experience. In terms of their benefits you know if they have children they are exposing them to all these international people and the volunteers get to see what it’s like living in a South African family...”* (Madden, personal communication, 2014 September 12).

Host families provide a much needed basis for the formation of cross-cultural understanding. Both organisations are committed to providing this for all their volunteers. This aspect of their implementation is not only a marker of ‘best practice’ (Raymond, 2007) but also their commitment to immersing volunteers in a culture different to their own.

Volunteers highlighted that living with host families was indeed a learning curve. One volunteer highlighted how she needed to be more flexible to the situation in her host family:

*“I really like it, there have been some issues like we don’t actually have our own key so when you have to organise you have to be less flexible with your plans because if you’re out you might not be able to get back cos you don’t have the keys things like that but I have gained some kind of understanding like we can talk about South Africa from their perspective and that kind of thing yeah” –Lillian, PA*

Another volunteer was slightly more introspective when she reflected on her host family experience. She observed that issues of race and class were still very pertinent in the community she lived in:

*“The ... tensions between races is still very much there, I know it’s only twenty years ago but they have really strange, like especially coming from England where everyone is so peacy and you don’t ever mention race and everyone is equal whatever and then coming here and people talking about colour so obviously and that’s like the first thing that’s mentioned and everything is attached to your colour and the assumptions that are made from that, that just shocks me everyday still..” –Vee, CFH*

CFH programme supervisor mentioned that although volunteers are free on weekends, the programme expects them to still act as volunteers rather than ‘voluntourists’. She makes this distinction to indicate that volunteers must be cognisant of their purpose in Cape Town:

*“UK volunteers spend their weekends often times in Cape Town doing tourist stuff, sometimes not such good stuff but um we’ve tried set some structure in this programme in ICS that they’ve come here to make an impact to integrate and not to do ‘volutourism’. This programme is strictly volunteering and not voluntourism so we have limited exposure that they can actually stay over in Cape Town” (Hanedoes, personal communication, 2014 August 22).*

Vee, a volunteer on the ICS programme reported experiencing some kind of discomfort when she had to travel outside of the community.

*“Sometimes over the weekend we go to Waterfront and it feels almost uncomfortable. The wealth, there’s always white people eating and black or Coloured people serving... But I feel this is where the real problems and the real beauties are... There it’s just a bit posey, it doesn’t feel right” –Vee, CFH*

This is very different to the approach taken by Projects Abroad. It was highlighted that although the volunteers are there to work, they are still able to participate in the ‘tourism’ that is attached to the volunteering:

*“Weekends are their free time. So we don’t work on weekends, weekends and public holidays is their free time. Some of them go on the Garden Route, go for the Peninsula tour, shark cage diving. These are the different things that they go and do. Climb Table Mountain, so it’s their time to actually explore Cape Town South Africa you understand...” (Solomons, personal communication, 2014 September 18).*

This was a major criticism of volunteer tourism by Zavitz & Butz (2011) who pointed to the issue of volunteers extending their short stays in host countries merely to engage in tourist activity. Coaching for Hope has institutionalised their aforementioned focus on community in every aspect of their ICS programme. By limiting volunteers to certain activities over the weekends, they aim to ensure that the focus remains on volunteering work and less on tourism. Projects Abroad has a different approach which involves volunteers becoming tourists as well. This leads to the question of whether it is possible in volunteer tourism to completely separate volunteering from tourism (Wearing, 2001).

## **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of the research investigating the unique role that VTOs have to play to facilitate cross-cultural understanding between international volunteers and community members. This was done by discussing the four main themes that emerged from the analysis; these themes were further broken down into subthemes that were corroborated by the evidence from the research. The following chapter discusses these findings and makes recommendations for organisations operating within the volunteer tourism space in South Africa and for future research projects on the topic

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

This research project has focused on understanding how volunteer tourism organisations through their operations and programmes, are able to make cross-cultural understanding a reality. This chapter summarises the main discussion points from the findings chapter as well as makes recommendations for the future of organisations involved in volunteer tourism work.

### 5.2 A recapitulation of the operationalised principles

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on introducing the research topic and research area. The research objectives were operationalized into principles by Raymond (2007). This operationalisation made it easier for the researcher during the analysis stage. The data could easily be organised through some of the pre-existing codes derived from the principles. The principles and sub-principles derived are as follows:

- **Accurately matching volunteers' capabilities with project needs**
  - Developing and marketing a project accurately
  - Taking into account the special capabilities and matching those accordingly to complement and suit the goals of the project
  - Adequately preparing volunteers for their chosen project
  
- **Focussing more on 'experiential learning'**
  - Encouraging volunteers to keep a diary during their stay
  - Encouraging debriefing sessions for volunteers after each day/ week to reflect on their role in the project
  - Encouraging two way interaction with the community- possibly placing volunteers in host families

- **Encouraging cross-cultural understanding between volunteers**
  - Maintaining diversity within the volunteer tourist group
  - Encouraging interaction between international and local volunteers

The following sections of this chapter discuss the principles as they relate what was found by the researcher. The last section of this chapter makes recommendations for VTOs as well as for future research in this area.

### **5.3 Organisational structure**

The findings in Chapter four indicated the two types of organisational structures that exist within the two VTO case studies. The organisational structure was found in this research to influence the recruitment, planning and preparation of volunteers. Skillshare International as an organisation has a very clear theory of change that is focused on active citizenship. This filters into every aspect of their organisation. The ICS programme employs a rigorous selection procedure which filters through volunteer applications to pick only the most suitable individuals. The structure of the programme is focused on placing the volunteers into a local community over a nine week period. As mentioned previously the aspect of project duration is relevant when assessing cross-cultural understanding (Zavitz & Butz, 2011). ICS programme is very strict on the responsibilities and duties of the volunteer. The volunteers are thoroughly trained by professionals on how to tackle problems in their relevant communities. The results show that this is ultimately a result of how the ICS programme is structured. As previously noted Raymond (2007) suggests that a means of good practice volunteer tourism organisations must ensure that volunteers have sufficient information to undertake their duties.

To further discuss the issue of the importance of structure, Projects Abroad may be used as an example. Due to the history and nature of the organisation, Projects Abroad's structure allows for a free flow of volunteers throughout the year for any given period. The research found that this type of structure makes it difficult for an organisation to be fully committed to fostering cross-cultural understanding, as they have no control over the type of volunteers they receive, their age, skill-set, qualification or availability. For instance training procedures may not be as uniform or extensive since it occurs sporadically. Although the structure is

likely to attract more volunteers, it does little for the organisation in terms of fostering cross-cultural understanding.

The difference in approach of these two organisations has produced very different results. Based on the case studies of both organisations it can be concluded that organisations with set structures and procedures as in the case of Coaching for Hope are more likely to have the capacity to develop and sustain cross-cultural understanding. It is important to note however that Coaching for Hope works with fewer volunteers than Projects Abroad. Therefore it may be easier for organisations operating at a smaller scale to have better control of their structure and operations. Furthermore as mentioned previously the recruitment of volunteers for Projects Abroad is done at specific offices in First World countries.

#### **5.4 Learning through immersion**

The research conducted revealed the importance of host families/ homestays in developing the most basic form of cultural understanding. Volunteers in both cases were provided with the unique opportunity to engage with the community via their host families. Volunteers are exposed to a new culture, social reality which may increase their consciousness of different societal problems that exist (McGehee & Santos, 2005). Overall the volunteers greatly benefit from the experience. The word “immersion” was used frequently by organisational representatives to describe the extent to which volunteers are involved with the community through their host families. It emerged from the research that not only do volunteers stand to gain but the host families also appreciate the experience of accommodating a volunteer from abroad.

Learning is an important step in the facilitation of cross-cultural understanding. Organisations that place volunteers with host families are in a unique position to “immerse” both the volunteer and the family to a new culture. These two cases both reveal the significance of host families for volunteers and local communities. However the volunteers are not given an option to choose whether they would like to stay with a host family, therefore they may have no prior experience to compare it to. Furthermore the researcher did not include visits to the homestays as part of her research. It is difficult to generalise based on this factor. Previous

research can attest to the fact that the presence of host families contributes greatly to cross-cultural understanding (Lough, 2010; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

### **5.5 The encouragement of cross-cultural understanding within the volunteer group**

An important foundation to fostering cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and communities is doing the same within the volunteer group itself (Raymond, 2007). Embracing cultural diversity is central to cross-cultural understanding (Lyons et. al, 2012). The results confirm that diversity of the volunteer group is beneficial for cross-cultural understanding.

The ICS programme operated under CFH pairs up South African and UK volunteers. The partnering up of volunteers provides a much needed local context directly relating to the work they are doing in the community organisations. CFH volunteers were able to interact even more at training days where they would brainstorm on ways they can best serve the communities they work in. This is a valuable aspect of learning as the volunteers can relate to one another on an equal footing. The diversity of volunteers at PAHRO occurs randomly since they are not deliberately selected. The findings suggest however that it may be worthwhile for Projects Abroad to consider including local volunteers to work with international volunteers in communities. In this way indigenous knowledge and capital are best utilised (Hartman, Paris & Blache-Cohen, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Callanan & Thomas, 2005).

Some scholars have suggested that future research focus on examining how cross-cultural experiences may differ among volunteers of different races (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). It is important to note however that there is very little racial diversity within the international volunteer groups of both organisations. The CFH and PAHRO volunteers were all white. This finding is consistent with other studies of volunteer tourism in South Africa (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Benson & Siebert, 2012; Alexander, 2012). Taking this into consideration it is vital for volunteer tourism organisations in South Africa to reflect on how best they can diversify their volunteer pool to include volunteers of all races.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

The research aimed to understand how cross-cultural understanding might be facilitated by VTOs not only to curb the unintended consequences of ‘misunderstanding’ but to also show the value of volunteer tourism programmes in development. The findings that emerged from this research were based on the two case studies. The researcher is cognisant of the fact that the selection of different case studies would have yielded different results. The findings however contribute to the limited scholarship on volunteer tourism and cross-cultural understanding in South Africa. Both CFH and Projects Abroad indicated their interest in using the findings of this dissertation to improve their work. The researcher would like to make a few recommendations for volunteer tourism organisations and future research.

### **5.6.1 Recommendations for VTOs**

Firstly the researcher found that it is worthwhile for VTOs to be committed to sustainable and ethical practices in volunteer tourism. This means that all VTOs operating in South Africa should be informed on responsible tourism practices and be committed to fulfilling its underlying objectives.

VTOs should consider innovative ways to ensure that the community needs are put first before all others. This may involve changing the structure and operations of the organisation in order to make volunteer tourism most effective. VTOs must ensure that volunteers are recruited and matched with organisations that have a need for them. Volunteers coming to South Africa must be well-informed about the communities they will be involved in. Sufficient training must be provided to volunteers to remind them of their responsibility to the community. VTOs must also ensure that much more emphasis is placed volunteering rather than tourism activities.

In addition the researcher recommends that the Department of Tourism build on the NMSRT framework to include volunteer tourism in order to encourage VTOs operating in South Africa to standardise their practices. This would ensure that responsible tourism practices are followed in a manner that reduces the likelihood of ‘cross-cultural misunderstanding’ from taking place. In this way the government is able to successfully manage volunteer tourism

activities to ensure that they are not dominated by commercial enterprises with no development motives.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher recommends that future research be conducted to investigate the unique contribution of host families to volunteer tourism scholarship in South Africa. This is a relatively under researched area that may provide useful insights for South African VTOs into the cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding that takes place in that context. Host families provide a unique setting for volunteers to become familiar with local culture. Further research can compare the different experiences of volunteers that have alternative accommodation arrangements with that of volunteers that stay with host families.

Another research recommendation would be to focus on finding ways the experience of volunteer tourism can be improved for volunteers and local communities especially in South Africa. South Africa's history and socio-economic context offers a unique setting from which scholars can learn. Building on from this point, future research can focus on how cross-cultural understanding can take place when volunteers from one Third World country travel and volunteer in another Third World country.

A recommendation that can be made to South African VTOs is looking into developing active citizenship programmes for local volunteers to travel to rural communities in South Africa to share their knowledge and engage in another form of exchange with young people in remote areas.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Volunteer tourism as an industry has grown immensely in South Africa in the last ten years. Volunteer tourism has been heavily criticised for its negative impact on local communities. The onus is on volunteer tourism organisations to ensure that they successfully leverage their position to ensure that volunteer tourism in South Africa promotes socially responsible work that truly is committed to the betterment of individuals' lives. Based on the two case studies, this research has found that organisational structure; learning through immersion and diversity in the volunteer pool contribute greatly to fostering cross-cultural understanding between community members and international volunteers.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Comparison of organisations

	<b>PAHRO</b>	<b>CFH</b>
<b>YEAR STARTED</b>	2007	2007
<b>NAME AND LOCATION OF HEAD OFFICE</b>	Projects Abroad SA- Cape Town Projects Abroad International Office- United Kingdom	Skillshare International –United Kingdom
<b>NUMBER OF PROJECTS</b>	7	6
<b>NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS</b>	20 (AVERAGE)	42
<b>TYPES OF PROGRAMMES</b>	Legal Work and Social Justice Projects	Sport for Development
<b>COMMUNITY OPERATION FOR SELECTED PROJECT</b>	Elsie’s River and Kraaifontein	Grassy Park
<b>RECRUITMENT METHOD</b>	Interview Process	Online Application
<b>PLACEMENT METHOD</b>	Allocated by Programme staff	Self-allocation
<b>PLACEMENT PERIOD</b>	Nine Weeks	Varies from two to eight weeks
<b>PRICE</b>	Cost not incurred by volunteer	\$5000 for eight weeks
<b>TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION</b>	Host families	Homestays
<b>TRAINING DURATION</b>	One to two hours	One week
<b>IMMEDIATE SUPPORT STAFF</b>	Volunteer Coordinator	Volunteer Coordinator and Team Leader

## **Appendix B: Interview Schedule**

### Research Questions

#### **A. The Organisation**

1. Background to the organisation:
  - a) Why was the organisation formed
  - b) What are the overall aims of the organisation
2. What range of projects do you have for volunteers?
3. How were these projects/communities selected?
4. What is the aim of having volunteers from abroad participate in local projects?
5. How do volunteers come to know about these projects?
6. What is the process of recruitment of volunteers?
7. How are volunteers placed with a particular project or initiative?
8. Can you elaborate on the training programme you have in place for the volunteers?
9. What types of activities outside of volunteering do you have planned for the volunteers during their stay?
10. Where are the volunteers accommodated while they are here?
11. What is a typical day for a volunteer like?
12. How much engagement exists between volunteers and host communities?
13. How does the organisation aim to foster this engagement?
14. How does the organisation maintain this engagement?
15. Do you conduct any kind of monitoring and evaluation processes for the projects?
16. What impact does volunteer and community engagement have for development as a whole?

#### **B. The Volunteer**

1. Background information
  - a) How long you have been volunteering at the organisation
  - b) Age
  - c) Gender
  - d) Occupation
  - e) Highest level of education attained
  - f) Country of origin

g) Type of Project

2. Did you come to South Africa solely to volunteer?
3. Have you volunteered elsewhere before?
4. Why did you want to be a volunteer?
5. Why did you choose to come to South Africa? Why this organisation?
6. How did you come to know about this project?
7. How were you selected to volunteer here?
8. What preparation did you undergo before volunteering?
9. What is your typical day like as a volunteer?
10. What were your perceptions of South Africa before coming here?
11. Do you currently reside in the community you serve?
12. What did you think about your project and community?
13. Have your perceptions about South Africa changed since you arrived?
14. Have your perceptions about the community changed since you arrived?
15. What have you learnt about your host community?
16. What do you think the community has learnt from you?
17. Did you build any friendships with the community?
18. What support did the VTO provide you with to enable you to do your job better?
19. How would you sum up your volunteer experience with X organisation so far?
20. How do you think the project has helped the 'host' community?
21. What do you think you have contributed to the community?
22. Have you encountered any difficulties during your volunteer experience?
23. Have you encountered any difficulty with any community members during your stay?
24. How did you resolve this matter?
25. What has been your experience working with communities of a different culture?
26. Do you plan to stay in contact with the host community (or friends made) after you leave?

**C. The representative of the 'host' community**

1. Background information
  - a) Age
  - b) Gender
  - c) Type of project

- d) Position in the community/ project
  - e) Duration of working with volunteers
2. What challenges are faced by the community?
  3. How is the host community prepared to work with volunteers?
  4. What is your expectation from volunteers when they come to the community?
  5. Do the volunteers meet your expectations?
  6. What sort of work do you do with the volunteers?
  7. How do the volunteers help to meet the challenges in the community?
  8. Do you think volunteers are adequately prepared when they come to the community?
  9. What have you learnt from the volunteers?
  10. What do you think the volunteers have learnt from you/ the community?
  11. Describe any friendships you have made with any of the volunteers
  12. What is your experience working with a volunteer from a different culture?
  13. Describe a positive experience you have had with a volunteer
  14. Describe a negative experience you have had with a volunteer
  15. What happens after the volunteer leaves?
  16. Do you think volunteers will still be involved in this community in five years time?
  17. What kind of support do the VTOs give you regarding volunteers?

## Appendix C: Consent Form



**University of Cape Town**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Consent Form**

Title of research project:	<b>Volunteer Tourism and Cross-Cultural Understanding</b>
Names of principal researchers:	<b>Rutendo Furusa</b>
Department/research group address:	<b>Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town</b>
Telephone:	<b>+27737591772</b>
Email:	<b>frsrut002@myuct.ac.za</b>
Name of participant:	
Nature of the research:	<b>To investigate the role of 'sending/host' organisations in fostering cross-cultural understanding between volunteers and host communities</b>

### **Description of the study and participant's involvement:**

The study involves a select number of international volunteer organisations with operations in Cape Town, South Africa. Organisational representatives, volunteers and community members will be selected to take part in the research.

The research process will involve an in depth interview with each participant, with the possibility of a follow up interview if clarification is required.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks with this type of research. The researcher has taken into account the maintenance of individual as well as organisational privacy (See Protection of confidentiality).

### **Benefits**

The research will help to help in the evaluation of volunteer tourism as a development tool. The findings from the research will possibly encourage researchers to look at the potential that exists when development initiatives and volunteer tourism are combined. The area of cross-cultural understanding within volunteer tourism in South Africa is under researched. The findings from this research can influence further study on the topic.

### **Protection of confidentiality**

The researcher will ensure that the participant's identity is not revealed at any point. All identifying details will be removed in all transcripts and in the dissertation.

### **Voluntary participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
  - I understand that my personal details may be included in the research / will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable (delete as applicable.)
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.

- I understand that this research might be published in a research journal or book. In the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

Name of Participant / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures of Researchers: \_\_\_\_\_