

“We are not tourists. We fit in this community”: Relationship between Volunteer Tourists and  
Residents in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica  
A Case Study

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management  
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Winnipeg, MB, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

Unlike mass tourism, volunteer tourism has been regarded to provide an authentic and mutually beneficial relationship between volunteer tourists and residents based on volunteering. Nevertheless, little research has been conducted to understand the reality of relationships. By exploring volunteer tourists' emotional solidarity with residents, the researcher aims to uncover the social relations between volunteer tourists and residents in practice.

This exploratory study was conducted in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica during November 2012 to January 2013. Interviews, participant observations, and diaries were used to collect the data. Based on the two months of ethnographic field research, this research suggests that volunteer tourism may not be superior to so-called “mass tourism” in terms of building harmonious relationships between volunteer tourists and resident. In this study, volunteer tourists' feelings of closeness were merely feelings which boosted the identity of volunteer tourists from “tourists” to “volunteers.” Volunteer tourists and residents rarely had meaningful relationships due to language differences. Volunteer tourists rarely developed cultural understandings mostly because of their stereotypes.

This article contributes to the growing body of literature on volunteer tourism by exploring the volunteer tourism experience from the perspectives of international volunteers at seven different volunteer organizations at Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica.

*Keywords:* volunteer tourism, emotional solidarity, inter-cultural relationships

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest appreciation goes to supervisor “Dr. Michael Campbell” who devoted considerable time and effort to my progress and continuously encouraged me throughout the whole process. Your support, guidance, and unending patience have allowed me to write better and learn to love research. Thank you for the research grants which enabled me to conduct field research in Puerto Viejo. At the same time, I would like to acknowledge “Dr. Christine Van Winkle”; Your encouragement, hospitality and assistance are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank “Dr. Susan Frohlick”; Your sincere advice and knowledge of Puerto Viejo helped me a lot throughout this research. Thank you for your sincere support in building connections with the people in Puerto Viejo and for teaching me how to respect the people and their culture.

I would like to extend thanks to everyone who supported me and taught me in the production of this thesis. I have great appreciation for Bryn, Lindsay, Katherine, Curtis, and Josh who conducted cross-check analysis of data, Mehdi, Julie and Karina who proofread my thesis, Susie, Mars and Alice who helped me to build connections with many volunteer organizations and residents in Puerto Viejo. I greatly appreciate to all the staff at the volunteer organizations and the 16 study participants who participated in this study. Without your assistance and cooperation, conducting this research would not have been possible. I will always remember you and your sincere assistance.

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents. You always encourage me and support me. I love you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Volunteer tourism, VT, has been gaining in popularity around the world (Conran, 2011; Kevin & Joanne, 2012; Keese, 2011; Lee, 2010). Defined as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the place of daily activity to assist others in need” (McGehee and Santos, 2005, p. 760), it is positioned within the spectrum of alternative tourism. Unlike mass tourism that has been criticized partially due to engender an exploitative, superficial, and stereotypical relationship between hosts and guests, this form of tourism has been regarded to provide a creative, authentic and mutually beneficial relationship based on volunteering (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). It is suggested that the increasing interaction between volunteer tourists and host residents can facilitate the development of cross-cultural understanding, and positive feelings which can reduce tensions and foster global peace (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; Freya, 2003; Freya, 2006; Wearing, 2001). With these assumptions, it is believed that VT will bring international solidarity, and to support the change of the unequal structure of the world (Conran, 2011). Hence volunteer tourism is known as sustainable tourism that has the potential to foster alternative and positive relationship on both the tourism community and volunteer tourists (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007).

This form of tourism has now become more popular among tourists who want to immerse oneself in the local culture and build deeper relationship with the local community while contributing to community development or natural conservation (Sin, 2009; Ong, Pearlman, and Leonie, 2001; Ooi and Laing, 2010; Brightsmith, Stronza, and Holle, 2007).

However, recent studies argue that these positive benefits of volunteer tourism are often taken as granted, stating that volunteer tourism does not always produce deep relationship which

can contribute to international peace (Raymond & Hall, 2008), the deep relationship does not always produce sympathetic understanding (Raymond and Hall, 2008), and the deep affective relationship between locals and volunteer tourists can romanticize unequal structure of the relationship (Conran, 2011; Simpson, 2004). As well, previous volunteer tourism research created a 'self and other' dichotomy between volunteer tourists and residents resulting in stereotypes, power inequality, and limited understanding of the relationship (Simpson, 2004).

Investigating emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and locals can begin to transcend this unbalanced perspective and provoke a better understanding of the relationship. Emotional solidarity refers to affective bonds individuals feel with one another that are characterized by interaction, shared belief and shared behavior (Woosman, 2008; Woosnam, 2009). Emotional solidarity is believed to replace the "self-serve-other" mindset to a more cooperative mindset (Jacobs & Allen 2005; Wearing & Wearing 2001). This theory is applied to guide this study to understand the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents.

There is a need to explore the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents, simply because building harmonious relationships is one of the important initiatives of volunteer tourism. Previous studies mostly focused on the cross-cultural understanding, based on the degree of interaction between volunteer tourists and residents. However, the studies rarely examined how volunteer tourists feel about their relationships with residents, and rarely explored other possible generators of close relationships. An emotional solidarity research framework could provide essential information, so that one might gain a better understanding of whether the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents are compatible with the ideal objectives suggested by the primary pioneers of volunteer tourism.

This research could also address the emotional solidarity concept developed by Woosnam (2008). Although the emotional solidarity scale has shown high internal consistency and high validity (Woosnam & Norman, 2009; Woosnam, 2010a; Woosnam, 2010b; Woosnam, 2011), emotional solidarity has been tested only in destinations where a majority of the tourists are domestic (Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009; Woosnam & Norman, 2009; Woosnam, 2010a; Woosnam, 2010b). Therefore, the application of emotional solidarity within international volunteer tourism research is of "paramount importance to add credence to the current findings" (Woosnam, 2010a). In addition, this study may assist in the development of measurement tools for the theory, because the nature of volunteer tourism is different from that of leisure tourism. Because volunteer tourism activities include leisure activities and volunteer work, and volunteer tourists live in local communities, the measures of shared behavior, shared beliefs, and emotional solidarity may be found to be significantly different from those of Woosnam's studies.

As well, there are some questions related to the equality in the relationship. Do volunteer tourists feel that they share many commonalities with the residents or feel that they are different from the residents because they are from developed countries? Do volunteer tourists improve their understanding about the residents and the culture or strength their pre-hold stereotypes related to poverty? If they feel they get to understand the residents, how they understand them? The answers related to these questions would help in understanding whether volunteer tourists feel superior compared to the local people, or build a sense of belonging to the local community or the world based on equality.

## **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to understand the volunteer tourists' relationship with residents within Puerto Viejo using the framework of emotional solidarity from the case study approach.

Relationships can be studied from either perspective of residents or tourists (or both) (Woosnam, 2008). After considering the accessibility, cultural background, and language ability of the researcher (speaking Korean and English), I decided to focus on the perspective of volunteer tourists while they are on site, Puerto Viejo.

### **Objectives of this research include:**

1. To understand the social relations those are formed between residents and volunteer tourists.
2. To understand how volunteer tourists identify themselves within their relationship with residents while they are participating in a volunteer tourism program.
3. To describe commonalities and differences that volunteer tourists believe they have with residents.
4. To describe stereotypes and/or perceptions volunteer tourists have toward their volunteering Area.
5. To extend the theory of emotional solidarity by applying the theory in the context of international volunteer tourism where volunteer tourists and residents are from different cultures.

## **Research Questions**

The key research questions are addressed:

- 1) What are the social relations that are formed between residents and volunteer tourists in practice in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica?

2) How do volunteer tourists identify themselves within their relationship with residents?

3) What commonalities and differences do volunteer tourists express they have with residents in Puerto Viejo?

### **Definition of Terms**

Throughout this proposal, there are a number of key terms used. The following definition will ensure that a common understanding is reached amongst all readers.

#### **Sustainable tourism**

Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. (UNEP, 2012) Therefore, sustainable tourism should aim to support the integration of poverty reduction at the global and national levels and should ensure a wider involvement of developing communities in tourism operations in order to contribute to poverty reduction in developing countries (UNWTO, 2004). As well, sustainable tourism should ensure the natural, social and cultural sustainability of tourism, with a special focus placed on the rights and interests of local communities.

#### **Volunteer tourism**

Wearing (2001) describes VT as "... a direct interactive experience that causes value change and changed consciousness in the individual which will subsequently influence their lifestyle, while providing forms of community development that are required by local communities" (2001:x). Later, McGeehee and Santos (2005) combined tourism and volunteer service defining VT as "utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need". VT is also considered "reciprocally

beneficial tourism activity for both tourists (e.g., merging oneself to local culture) and host community residents (e.g., receiving assistance to repair structures or conserve cultural or environmental resources)” (Woosnam & Lee, 2010).

As these definitions show, altruism, interaction with local community, non-recompense, tourism combined with volunteer service, utilizing discretionary time and money are the characteristics of VT. This new form of alternative tourism has become increasingly popular under a variety of names, such as VT, volunteer vacation, mini-mission, pro-poor tourism, learning tours, service learning vacations, and voluntourism.

### Tourists

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2012) defines a tourist as one who "travels to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. Tourists can be grouped into leisure-recreational traveler, business traveler, relatives or friends visitors, students who study abroad less than a year, working holiday traveler, international conference visitors, and festival or fair participants (Tour.go, 2006).

### Volunteer tourists

A volunteer tourist is classified as any “tourist who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way and undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, p. 1). Add to the classification, Wearing (2001) defines volunteer tourists as people who invest their time, budget, and human power at a destination far from home to gain cultural, environmental,

and spiritual experiences. Based on this definition, this study includes volunteer tourists, who spend their time less than one consecutive year and more than a day, and exclude foreign staffs who stay in the volunteered region for a long period time, or who plan to stay in the region longer than a year.

### Residents

Residents in the host communities are not a homogeneous group of people, nor merely service recipients of a volunteer project. They can be staff with volunteer projects and stake holders of tourism. Residents in volunteer tourism host communities that can be grouped differently depending on their nationality, and emigration status. Residents in volunteer tourism can be defined as “people in the local community who host volunteers” (Mcgehee & Andereck, 2009, p.40.) or “residents who were regularly exposed to volunteer tourists” (Mcgehee & Andereck, 2009; p.41). In this research, residents refer to those who are not belong to the definition of tourists from WTO, such as immigrants, second-home owners, permanent residents, foreign staff working over one consecutive year in Costa Rica.

### Local residents

It is controversial who the local residents are. However, for this study, “local residents” is used as a broad category of racial and ethnic difference to refer to a diverse group of people residing in the area whose backgrounds include some Caribbean heritage (Jamaican, Cuban) often mixed with Latino ancestry and/or those who claim Caribbean as their identity (Flohlick, 2011).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter outlines the background to the proposed research regarding tourism for peace, alternative tourism, and volunteer tourism (VT), the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents, and emotional solidarity. First, this chapter will introduce the argument about the role of tourism as a force for global peace, as well as the role of alternative tourism. This in-depth discussion may help readers to understand the movement of peace work in tourism areas, and how tourism can contribute to global peace. After, this research will discuss the background of VT such as the objectives of volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists' motivation, history of VT and the positive and negative impacts of VT, all of which will help readers to understand the context of VT in which volunteer tourists and locals meet one another. Later, this chapter will examine how the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents has been described and researched in VT study. Finally this chapter will analyze emotional solidarity as the research frame work of this study to explain the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents.

#### **Tourism as a force for Peace**

Can tourism contribute to the global peace? In the late 20th century, as great numbers of countries opened their borders to tourists, scholars argued whether tourism could foster global peace or if it was simply a beneficiary of the peace (D'Amore, 1988). While the debate is still going on in the academic area, international organizations and regional leaders tend to proclaim tourism as a great force for global peace and actively use tourism for this purpose.

The issue whether tourism can bring global peace is one of the most interesting topics in academic areas. Following the end of the cold war, many formerly sensitive regions opened their

borders one after another, and allowed tourists the ability to freely travel. Every year millions of travelers cross political boundaries seeking the opportunity to learn local culture, experience welcoming nature, and build relationship with local people (Mill & Morrison, 2002; D'Amore, 1988). Regarding this phenomenon, a number of tourism researchers have debated whether or not tourism is a major contributor towards global peace (Kim, Timothy, & Han, 2007; D'Amore, 1998, Chen, 2007) or just a beneficiary of it (Litvin, 1998; Pizam, Jafari, & Milman, 1991).

Scholars suggest that tourism may not be a generator of peace but a beneficiary. Their arguments are based on the negative impacts of tourism in international relationships and tourist destination countries. They claim that historically tourism has not caused peace but has caused international conflicts (Litvin, 1989), the interaction between tourists and locals does not bring understanding (Litvin 1989; Milman, Reichel & Pizam, 1990), and that the tourism destinations lose economic benefits due to the leakage effect (Konadu & Agyeman, 2001; Poyya, 2003).

However, it is hard to assert that tourism is just a beneficiary of peace, since there were numerous cases and research findings that support the idea that tourism has indeed improved international understanding, international cooperation, and economic interdependence which are the predicates of peace (Cortright, 2008; Oneal, Russett & Berbaum, 2003).

First, tourism is a human phenomenon which can have significant impact on the society at both the government and individual level (Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008; Yu, 1997). From a theoretical perspective, Yu (1997) drew on politics and tourism literature to assess the relationship of politics and tourism between China and Taiwan. He assessed whether tourism as a low politics activity influenced initial reconciliation between the people of the two countries and governments. As a result, the researcher found that tourism development between the two countries contributed to a decrease in tension and hostility not only between the people but also

with the political relations of the two governments which resulted in reduced international tension (Yu, 1997).

Second, the interaction between tourists and residents can reduce tension between groups by fostering solidarity (Woosnam, 2010; AP, 1990; Mings, 1988; Chen, 2009). Ming (1988) stated that tourism broaden people's minds to contribute to mutual understanding. In a study of residents in South Carolina, Woosnam (2010) found as the degree of interaction between tourists and residents increased, the more residents and tourists understood each other and experienced emotional closeness with one another.

Third, the tourism industry can contribute to peace through enhancing economic interdependence. Political studies have investigated the relationship between economic interdependence and peace, and have acknowledged that trade offsets the possibility of military conflict (Reed & William, 2003). Reed and William (2003) state "economic interdependence makes conflict too costly, and also economic interdependence decreases the probability of conflict by solving problems associated with asymmetric distributions of information" (p.54). As well, economic exchanges between countries increase the contacts between the nations. The increased contact strengthens the sense of community and reduces conflict (Oneal, Russett, & Berbaum, 2003). As with trade, tourism fosters interdependence in many parts of domestic and international society by connecting local government, local communities, hospitality sectors, residents and tourists (Blank 1989; Gunn & Var 2002; Leiper 1990, Woosnam, 2009).

Therefore, it should be recognized that if tourism is well managed, it can significantly foster global peace. Important international documents, international organizations, NGOs agree with the opinion and proclaim in their documents and conferences that tourism should foster global peace.

The pioneer work in the notion ‘tourism for global peace’ can be found in the declarations of UNWTO, World Tourism Organization. In 1967, the United Nations declared the year 1967 as International Tourism Year, with the slogan “Tourism, Passport to Peace”. Later in 1980, The UNWTO developed the notion and declared that “tourism can be a vital force for world peace and provide the basis for international understanding” (World Tourism Conference, 1980, p.1). This endeavor to link tourism and peace continued in the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourists Code that was adopted in 1985 (Freya, 2006). The flow of the peace movement in tourism areas triggered the birth of The International Institute For Peace Through Tourism, IIPT which has dedicated to a number of global conferences, Global Summit on Peace, publication of Codes of Ethics and Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, and Global Code of Ethics for Tourism from UNWTO (IIPT, 2012). Later, UNWTO affirmed the important dimension and role of tourism as "a vital force for the promotion of international understanding, and peace" (UNWTO, 2012). Finally, in 1999, UNWTO published the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism to “expand the tourism sector’s contribution to economic prosperity, peace and understanding among all the nations of the world” (UNWTO, 1999, p.2). The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999) stated that “The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism” (p. 4).

In addition to the international tourism code and documents, there are a number of efforts to facilitate tourism as a tool to create a better world (Freya, 2006). The examples are numerous government agencies that provide international volunteer services, such as Sida, Peace Corps, Koica, and Australian Volunteers for International Development. As well, non-governmental organizations such as World Vision, Earth Watch, Compassion, and Habitat for Humanity have

actively lead volunteer tourism since the late 1960's for the advocacy of social justice and environmental conservation (Ong, Pearlman, & Leonie, 2011; Benson & Henderson, 2011)

A noticeable example of this is the "Global Village" of Habitat for Humanity which sends volunteers abroad to build houses and provides them to people in need on long-term mortgages at no profit and no interest. Habitat for Humanity stated its website that "Habitat for Humanity Global Village volunteer teams travel to exciting destinations in the United States and around the world. They advocate for better living conditions and raise funds to help those in need." (Habitat for Humanity USA/Canada, 2012). True to its statement, this program actively utilizes tourism as a tool in building affordable housing and promoting homeownership as a means to breaking the cycle of poverty with thousands of volunteers participating annually.

Besides government and NGO work, individual travelers and the tourism industry have also begun to actively participate in peace work, as social inequality and impoverishment are recognized worldwide (Wearing, 2001). An example of this is the emergence of cultural tourism, eco-tourism, backpacker tourism, and volunteer tourism in the 1970's-1980's which is also called alternative tourism. These new forms of tourism promote the idea that tourism can and should be organized in a way that preserves, respects and benefits destinations and local people (e.g. Good Travel, IMAGINE PEACE). The next section in this essay will discuss alternative tourism.

**Alternative Tourism.** Alternative tourism can be regarded as tourism that is more appropriate than conventional mass tourism in supporting local communities and that has minimal negative cultural, economic, and social effects on tourism destinations (Weaver, 2006; Conway & Timms, 2010). Alternative tourism is believed to aid in the conservation of the environment, development of local communities, and international solidarity (Brightsmith, Strongza, & Holle, 2008; Rattan, Eagles, & Mair, 2012; Freya, 2006).

Forms of alternative tourism existed long before the term “alternative tourism” made its debut. The origin of alternative tourism can be found in the ecumenical Christian movement about a hundred years ago (Weaver, 2006). However, alternative tourism began to draw attention from the industry and academy after the 1980s, partially due to the obvious negative impacts of unregulated mass tourism on the sphere of social, cultural, and environment aspects of the local community (Weaver, 2006; Spenceley, 2005).

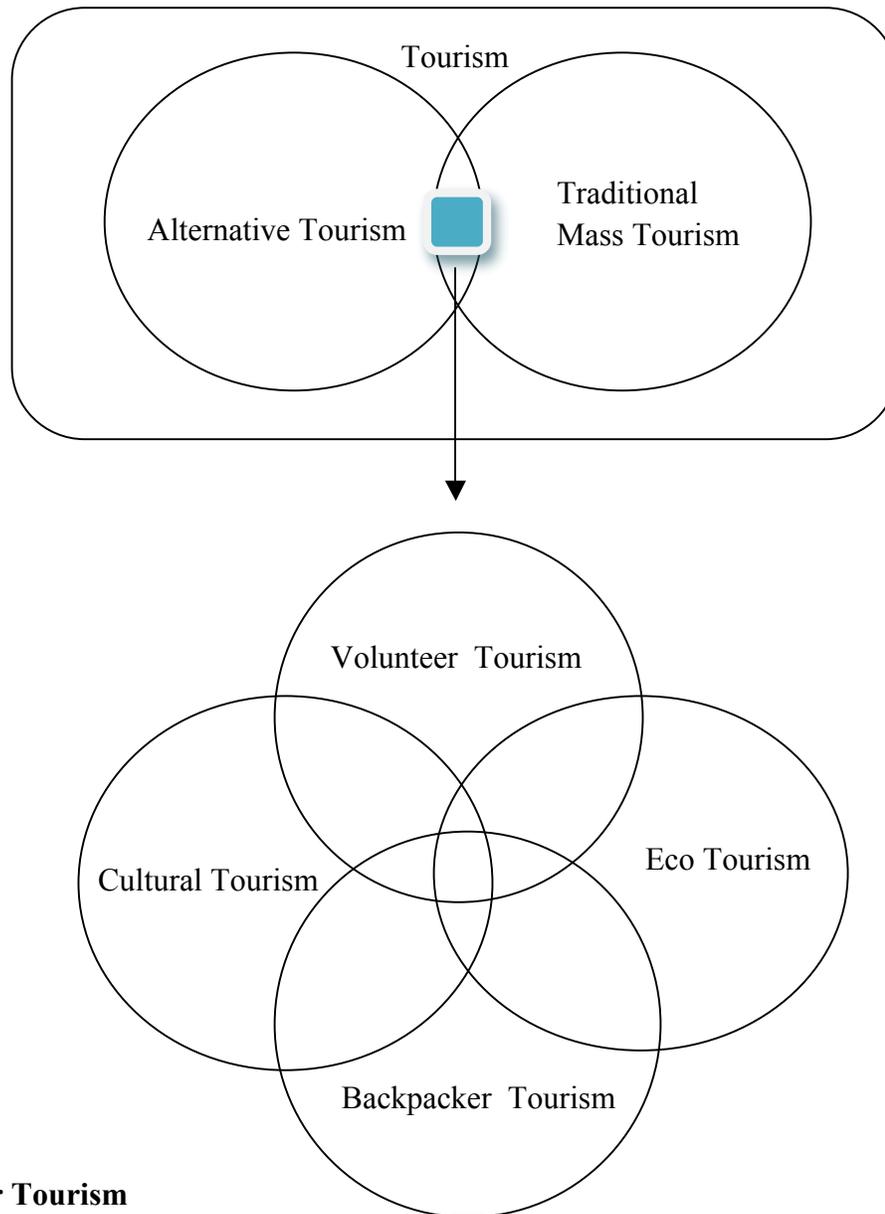
The damage from the tourism industry was greater in economically developing countries, since international corporations led the development of tourism in the regions given their power in finance (Conway & Timms, 2010). Corporations investigated the tourism business in the region by purchasing land from local people, and managing their own tourism businesses, such as hotels and resorts. However, residents were often blocked away from the tourism destinations and were negatively affected from such businesses, including lack of land for farming and lack of water caused by massive water consumption by these businesses (Jeon, 2010). Moreover, the leakage effect was significant. At most, 50% to 70% of the tourism income generated in countries went to international tourism companies because most tourism consumption was with international hotels, resorts, airplane companies, and international travel agencies (Kim, 2001). Although some locals adapted their lifestyle and participated in the tourism business, most of them were placed in low-income service work or seasonal jobs (Weaver & Weaver, 2006). This absence of local empowerment in tourism development devastated local communities (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009; Butler 1990).

In this context, ideas arose that claimed that tourism should benefit the local community (Wearing, 2001). Since the 1980s, the movement against the ill effects of mass tourism received great support and resulted in the emergence of alternative tourism, which highlights the

importance of empowerment of locals, consistency with local values, and the harmony with local cultures (Weaver, 2006; Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009).

According to Weaver (2006), alternative tourism has certain characteristics in their markets, attractions, accommodation, economic status and regulation. First, for its market, alternative tourism has an allocentric to midcentric market, and does not have, or has less of, a distinct seasonality and dominant market (Weaver, 2006). Visitors tend to stay for an extended length of time, so that they can learn about the culture and value of the local community. Second, the tourism attractions in alternative tourism are not built, contrived, nor highly commercialized (Weaver, 2006). Rather they are pre-existing, so that they can represent the community, and attracts both locals and residents (Weaver, 2006). Third, the accommodations of alternative tourism are small scale, and have local ownership (Weaver, 2006). As well, it does not concentrate on tourism activities such as all - inclusive hotels, so that it supports downstream linkage effect of tourism community. Last, alternative tourism empower local community so that it highlights community well-being, not profits from it (Weaver, 2006).

Alternative tourism encompasses diverse types of tourism, including backpacking tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, and volunteer tourism. However, alternative types of tourism can still damage and exploit the cultural and natural environment, if tourism is unregulated (Duffy, 2002; McAfee, 1999; Weaver 2006). Hence, alternative tourism entails an attempt to empower the locals making it an alternative to traditional mass tourism, rather than a type of tourism (Butler, 1990; Conway, 2010). Figure 1 displays the interconnected relationship between diverse types of tourism.

**Figure 1: Interconnected Relationship between Diverse Types of Tourism****Volunteer Tourism**

**Definitions volunteer tourism.** Volunteer tourism, VT, emerged from the idea that tourism can make a positive impact on tourism destinations, and by volunteering, tourists could directly support their destinations for the development of the communities (Sin, 2010). VT is also considered mutually beneficial for both tourists and residents alike since it brings reconciliation, a cross-cultural understanding, and global citizenry between the two groups (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Woosnam & Yoon, 2011; Sin, 2010). Given these facts, many

scholars regarded VT as the central model of alternative tourism (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Wearing, 2001, 2004).

In this line of thought Wearing (2001) defined VT as alternative tourism that “makes use of holiday-makers who volunteer to fund and work on social or conservation projects around the world and aims to provide sustainable alternative travel that can assist in community development, scientific research or ecological restoration” (Wearing, 2004, p. 217). Wearing suggested VT as “a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centering the convergence of natural resource qualities” (Wearing, 2001, p.12).

As form of alternative tourism, VT shares many commonalities with a number of different types of alternative tourism, such as cultural tourism, backpacker tourism, scientific tourism, and ecotourism in terms of tourists’ motivation and cooperation with residents for the sustainable development of local communities (Wearing, 2001; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Ooi & Laing, 2010; Brighsmith, Stronza & Holle, 2008). However, VT is different from other types of alternative tourism, because tourists directly participate in community development projects or natural conservation projects as volunteers, with no direct financial reward. A few scholars also distinguished VT as involving volunteer tourists who spend considerable amounts of money to participate in volunteer work abroad (Palacios, 2010; Brown, 2005). However, this is not always the case. For example, in South Korea, ten out of fifteen VT organizations pay for travel expenses such as housing, food, and round -trip air tickets. Six of them even provide for total travel expenses (e.g, Asan Nanum Foundation-International Volunteer, Caffebene-Youth Volunteer, G Market-Global Citizenship For Sharing, Hyundai Motor Group-Happy Move, LS-Student Volunteers, RaonAtti).

**Objectives of volunteer tourism.** The primary objective of VT is to develop communities in need through local empowerment. As with other types of alternative tourism, VT is viewed as contrary to the ill effects of traditional mass tourism because volunteer tourism minimizes the leakage effect, and strives to achieve independent and sustainable community development by empowering local communities in the tourism development process and tourists' direct participation (Wearing, 2001, 2004; Crabtree, D., 1998; Kim, personal communication, November 3, 2011). During the VT development process, volunteer tourists participate in some part of the community development, research, and natural conservation projects by providing labor force. For this reason, VT appeals to volunteer tourists who want to make positive changes abroad (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011).

The other significant objective of VT is to create harmonious relationships between volunteer tourists (or volunteer-sending countries-guests) and residents (or volunteered countries- hosts) (Conran, 2011; Ha, 2009, ; Kim, 2011; Raonatti, 2012; Brown, 2005). As volunteer tourists participate in local projects, as well as work and live with residents during their volunteer tourism programs, both volunteer tourists and residents have more opportunities to observe real-life communities, learn another culture, and interact extensively one another, compared with traditional tourism (Woosnam and Lee, 2011; Cater, 2008; Chen and Chen, 2011). Voluntourists and residents can actively expand their social identities and enhance cross-cultural understanding, friendship, and solidarity with one another through their intensive interactions (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Sin, 2010; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). Some experts further argue that the improved positive relationship can change the unequal structure of the world (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Brown & Lehto, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Conran, 2011) and cultivate international solidarity (Freya, 2006).

However, the factors that draw volunteer tourists into VT appear to be more than just providing a positive change to global society. Chen and Chen (2011) investigated Chinese Village Traditions expeditions from the Earthwatch Institute in 2008. The results showed that authentic experience, interaction with new people and exotic cultures are the most significant motivation of volunteer tourists. Unique styles of trips and interest in travel were also mentioned as important reasons for participating, as VT provides opportunities to interact with the real life of the local people. In addition to pleasure tourism motivations previously mentioned, VT motivation shares many similarities with leisure motivation, such as self-development, eco enhancement, and escape from daily life (Broad 2003; Chen and Chen, 2011; Sin, 2009).

Additionally, volunteer tourists may pursue their career development because volunteer work supports volunteer tourists to improve their transferable skills and sometimes even professional skills, such as health assistance, team work skills, and international communication skills (Palacios, 2010; Guttentag, 2009; Sin, 2010). Governments, NGOs, and numerous other organizations also express their interest in earning a profit for their own benefit (Kim, personal communication, November 3, 2011).

**Table 1:*****Volunteer Tourism Objectives***

VT Objectives	
Organizations, Academy refer;	Tourists refer;
Development Community Empowerment	Authentic experience
Natural Conservation	Interact with local people and culture
Improve relationship between people/countries	Desire to travel
Improve cross cultural understanding	Self-development / Ego enhancement
Global Peace	Desire to help

(Reference; Ooi & Laing, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2011; Lee, 2011; Wearing 2001; Conran, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Kevin & Joanne, 2012; Freya, 2006)

**The history of volunteer tourism.** Although not all international development projects are primarily based on self-interest, self-oriented international volunteer tourism programs strengthen the unequal structure of the world by creating logic of binaries, and practicing neocolonialism (Simpson, 2004, 2005; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Cater, 2008). This phenomenon has been expressed throughout the history of VT.

It is controversial where the history of volunteer tourism began. Some argues that the history of volunteer tourism is found to have begun from between 1915-1920, after World War 1 (Lee, 2009; Tomazos, 2009; Brown, 2005). With the influence of imperialism, the World War that occurred in Europe destroyed whole societies and affected the entire continent. The dreadful misery was a significant shock, however, ironically, it also created a pacifism that triggered VT (Tomazos, 2009).

In 1919, an international conference was held in Netherlands, where “Pierre Ceresole” represented the idea of organized international volunteers who could work together to reconstruct a demolished world (Lee, 2009). The belief was that cooperation and collaboration based on friendship could bring about a solidarity that could effectively be recovered from hostility (Tomazos, 2009). This inspiring conference was followed by the first Service Civil International Work Camp which was, designed to reconstruct Vannes, which is near Verdun in France (Lee, 2009). This pacific movement inspired a number of European international volunteers and Christian groups to organize work camps to support the development of communities in need and enhance solidarity following World War I and during World War II. During this time, the volunteer work was motivated by altruism and pacifism, not by tourism motivation (Tomazos, 2009).

From the 1950s to the 1970s, overseas volunteering experienced significant development, primarily because of the initiatives of government-supported international volunteers and the expansion of the tourism industry (Tomazos, 2009). After World War II, the world separated into two parts based on its political ideologies: one that belonged to the democratic system/capitalism under the axis of the US and the other belonging to the communist system that was represented by the Soviet nation. During the cold war, the Americans and the Soviets strove to expand their economic and political influence to more countries (Dockrill & Hopkins, 2006). In this context, in 1961, the American government formed the Peace Corps to gain the hearts of people from countries that needed their support. The overt purpose of the Peace Corps was to build peace and friendship with people in need, but it furtively aimed to create a positive image of America for people in other countries and influence them to adapt to democratic system and/or capitalism (Tomazos, 2009). Government participation in volunteering overseas increased the number and

size of international volunteer projects later. However, it caused problems of neocolonialism in international development (Cobbs, 1997; Palacios, 2010).

The other factor that brought the expansion and increase in the number of VT was the development and expansion of tourism. After World War II, wealthy countries enjoyed increased discretionary time and money from the economic boom (Weaver, 2006). The increased standard of living influenced people in the World War winner countries to seek self-fulfillment during their leisure. These changes influenced people in wealthy countries to be more interested in international issues and global needs. This awareness affected tourism areas in that it increased the notion that tourism ventures could bring positive impacts on locals in tourism destinations (Harang, 2009). This consciousness led to an increase in alternative tourism where attempts were made to develop a form of travel that was more benign or beneficial to the local community and the ecological environment (Weaver, 2006). This increased global awareness stimulated volunteer organizations to create VT programs in order to promote their organizations and to raise funds for their causes (Carter, 2008; Novelli, 2005; Kim, personal communication, November 3, 2011).

Through this phenomenon, VT began to reflect tourists' motivations for engaging in volunteer tourism activities. VT rapidly increased its volume from the 1980s as a form of tourism that could fulfill a traveler's desire to learn about local culture, interact with the locals while providing practical assistance to their tourism communities. Advocacy of alternative tourism and a traveler's increased desire to experience an adventurous, educational -based tourism increased the popularity of VT (Wearing, 2001).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war in 1991, the US and the OECD intensified their neoliberalism. This expansion and globalization of neoliberalism

influenced policies that also affected the civil level (Conran, 2011). Moreover, the development of technology also affected the manner in which individuals connected to the world. "Civil society needs to develop in more globalized ways, in response, strengthening citizens' consciousness of themselves, and their capacities to act effectively, as global citizens." (John, Marjorie, & Alison, 2009, p. 164). In this context, global citizenship emerged as a virtue of a new generation to create a harmonious relationship among the people of the world (Kevin & Joanne, 2012). Political and community leaders, NGOs, and the media actively promoted the advantages of cultural exchanges, including VT, which was believed to bring cross-cultural understanding, tolerance of cultural diversity, and sustainable, structural changes to the world (Conran, 2011; Kevin & Joanne, 2012). This trend fostered the explosion of VT among the young generation and spread rapidly around the world through current tourism activities (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Campbell & Smith, 2006).

The popularity of VT is seen through the increasing number of VT organizations, which, increased from 16 in 1970 to 29 in 1980 and to 146 in 2000 (Tomazos, 2009). Currently, expenditures by the volunteerism market are between \$ 1.66 billion and \$ 2.6 billion (Goghlan, 2009). The popularity of volunteer tourism extended the awareness of international responsibility among the young generation (Conran, 2011; Hutnyk, 1996). In contrast, volunteer tourism appeared as marketable products of international development (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). As an increasing number of commercial companies participated in volunteer tourism for the profits, poverty reduction and environmental conservation became increasingly capitalized and volunteer tourism became regarded as a marketable tourism package program (Guttentag, 2009; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Causins, Evans, & Sadler, 2009). The commercialism in volunteer tourism raises

several ethical issues, such as endangering the associated environment and neglecting the needs of the locals (Guttentag, 2009; Tomazos & Cooper, 2012).

**Negative aspects of volunteer tourism.** Volunteer tourism, VT, was regarded as a promising sector of tourism that can bring a mutually beneficial relationship between host communities and tourists. However, recent studies raised several criticisms of volunteer tourism, as the damages from VT in some cases are obvious. The following literature discussed a few of the main issues in current volunteer tourism.

First, certain VT can be seen as representing a form of neo-colonialism. As the history of VT previously described, the developed world initiated and developed VT in developing countries for their own purpose. Indeed, the Peace Corps was initiated with political and colonial-like intentions (Cobbs, 1997).

The issues in neo-colonization can be magnified when we consider the cultural influence of volunteer tourism organizations on the VT host community. As an economic and socio-cultural event, tourism influences tourism destinations in various ways. Hence, it is commonly agreed that developing a successful, long-term, and sustainable tourism program requires consistency with local values and harmonious operation within the local environment, community, and cultures (UNWTO, 2004; Gusory, Chi, & Dyer, 2010). Volunteer tourists also affect the daily lives of locals because they stay and work with them (McGehee & Andereck, 2009). Additionally, VT encourages frequent and direct interaction between volunteer tourists and residents in host areas. Therefore, the socio-cultural impact of VT has the potential to be far more influential than traditional mass tourism. However, inadequate consideration is given to the cultural influence of VT from such organizations and from academia. Rather, in some cases, VT groups use their VT programs as opportunities to promote their organizations, corporations or

their countries. For example, Korean volunteer organizations typically send 10 to 30 volunteer tourists to small communities for their one to two-weeks volunteer programs [Personal communications, Sep, 2012]. In general, these VT programs consist of teaching the Korean language, and the Korean culture, while leaving little time for volunteers to learn about the communities or their language (Kim, 2009).

Additionally, organizations and volunteer tourists may exude “superiority” over local resident (Raymond & Hall, 2008). This problem can arise when VT provides volunteer tourists with the opportunity to participate in professional work areas such as construction, medical assistance, research, and even delivering babies. Typically, such experiences are not granted to volunteer tourists in their home countries unless they are professionals (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). However, in volunteer tourism, the unskilled volunteer tourists provide labor in the areas and sometimes even lead projects, as the volunteer tourists bring the images of advancement from their home countries, which are so-called ‘developed countries’ (Palacios, 2010).

Volunteer tourists self-centered motivations can increase the neglect of locals’ desires. A number of studies found that participants are more interested in self-centered interest such as having vacation, building their career rather than altruistic motivation such as supporting the communities (Chen & Chen, 2011; Sin, 2009; Ooi & Laing, 2010). One may argue that satisfying the volunteer tourists’ self-interested motivation is important as it can be a drive force that can attract more volunteer tourists into a greater number of international volunteer programs for the success of program, community development and harmonious relationship (Guttentag, 2009). However, if tourists’ self-interested motivation has more attention, it can result in unequal distribution of international development work.

Keese (2011) researched a geographical cluster of volunteer projects and found unequal distribution of volunteer opportunities around the world. In this research, India, Ecuador, Ghana, South Africa, Peru, Thailand and Costa Rica were viewed as the most popular countries. Furthermore, the top five popular countries in each developing region of Asia, South America, and Africa comprise more than 60—77% of the total number of volunteer projects in their respective regions. This phenomenon was echoed in the research by Tomazos and Butler (2009), which found that VT tends to develop in countries with a high Human Development Index (HDI) than in countries with lower HDI. This phenomenon reflects the notion that the attractiveness of such countries to volunteer tourists can be more influential than the needs of the community in the selection of the volunteering destinations.

Another problem is that volunteer tourists might regard volunteer tourism communities as a field for job training. Studies from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Korea where volunteer tourism initially developed commonly state that the VT experience became the 'must-haves experience' through which volunteer tourists can obtain professionalism for their future employment (Simpson, 2005 ; Kevin, and Joanne, 2012; The Chosunilbo, Lee and Kim., 2012., p. 11.26). Today's employment market is competitive, and requires a high level of skills, such as international communication, multiple language abilities, team work skills, and problem-solving skills. Volunteer tourism can be the right choice for people who do not have sufficient work experience to obtain those skills. Reflecting a necessity of the experience, it is not difficult to find a job searching Web site or on-line communities that share information about international VT. In Korea, a number of university students share advice on how to prepare a resume and how to impress in an interview to be selected in to free VT programs which that are normally hosted by major corporations, including (examples; Raonatti-

Kookim Bank, Hyundai Steel - Happy Yes, Happy Move Global Youth Volunteer – Hyundai and Kia).

Neglecting the needs of the locals can happen throughout the decision -making process. Although residents proposed the projects, the final decision to send volunteers lies with organizations that send such individuals. Sin (2010) stated that if locals do not have the appropriate contacts with organizations that have the capability to send volunteers, obtaining such support is almost impossible. Furthermore, although local stakeholders participate in the development process, they tend to agree with what foreign stakeholders say because they know that they do not have the control and financial power over the volunteer project (kimKim, personal interview, 2012).

Promoting dependency is another possible negative impact. Volunteer tourists and/or organizations may be unaware of the negative effects of their actions on the host community. For example, they may offer candies, pens, or old clothes to the children in the local community. However, researchers argue that free gifts can degrade the dignity of the locals and increase dependency (Guttentag, 2009; Sin, 2010). In the worst case, such gifts can also disrupt the local economy. A NGO staff member, noted that after developing regions in Philippines received clothing donations, residents in the towns no longer had to repair their clothes, which led to the collapse of several local tailor shops.

### **Volunteer tourism research on relationship**

**Previous studies on relationship between volunteer tourists and residents.** The close relationship developed from the intensive interaction between volunteer tourists generally from “The First World” and residents generally from “The Third World” is the center of volunteer tourism research (Conran, 2011; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Early

studies generally had a positive perspective toward VT, stating that VT provided more opportunities to interact with residents, which, in turn, produced intimate relationships in the two seemingly different worlds (Wearing, 2001; McGehee and Santos, 2005; McIntosh and Zahra, 2008; Brown and Morrison, 2003).

In particular, McIntosh and Zahra's (2007) study of volunteer tourists on a VT in an indigenous Maori community in New Zealand argues that VT can generate a more meaningful and lasting relationship caused by intense, genuine and social interaction between the residents and the tourists. A quote from an Australian volunteer tourists illustrates this theory: "We learned a lot from the experience but the biggest things we got out of it were the personally meaningful relationships....I felt more like a New Zealander than an Australian because I feel so welcomed" (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007, p.551).

Several studies also suggested that the intimate interaction between volunteers and residents enable volunteer tourists to improve their understanding about the culture of in which they volunteered and get to know about the real life of the people they helped, as well as the issues in the communities (Wearing, 2001; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007; Freya, 2003; McGehee&Santos, 2005; Conran, 2011; Kevin & Joanne, 2012; Raymond & Hall, 2007). Furthermore, they claim that improved understanding and intimate relationship emerged from VT experience that would change their world view and reduce the level of prejudice, conflicts and tension between volunteer tourists (and/or the First World) and their visiting communities (and/or the Third World). Hence, VT gradually fosters global peace (Gyan, Victor, & Cody, 2008, Brown and Morrison, 2003; Freya, 2006).

However, a growing amount of literature, especially critical perspective studies, challenges these optimistic assumptions saying that the positive impact of VT is possibly

overstated due to the fairly uncritical approach (Guttentag, 2009). These studies claim that VT can lead to cross cultural misunderstanding. As Sin (2009) and Kevin, and Joanne (2012) explained, VT involves volunteer tourists from developed countries working on projects in developing countries which gives rise to an unequal relationship whereby the giver might appear superior to the receiver. Therefore, if VT is not well managed, poverty can be “allowed to become a definer of difference, rather than an experience shared by people marginalized by resource distribution” (Simpson, 2004; p.688).

In fact, Raymond and Hall (2007) suggested a case in which volunteer tourists can deepen their stereotype with a quote from a volunteer tourist ‘They don’t know any better and they haven’t had what we have so to them that’s quite normal and they’re quite happy being like that’ (p.538). These stereotypes can lead to a negative cultural understanding, as a quote in Sin (2009)’s study shows ‘Stephen opines that the South African Blacks are indeed lazy and are poor because they choose to drink and smoke marijuana all day’ (p. 495). This example supports the claims of Simpson (2004) who point out that ‘to assume that a short period of contact alone breaks down stereotypes directly contradicts research suggesting that far from challenging pre-held views, contact experiences may in fact accentuate deep-seated attitudes’ (p.462).

**Volunteer tourist described in previous studies.** A volunteer tourist can be classified as “any tourist who, for various reasons, volunteers in an organized way and undertakes a holiday that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, p. 1). Add to the classification, Wearing (2001) defines volunteer tourists as people who invest their time, budget, and human power at a destination far from home to gain cultural, environmental, and spiritual experiences.

Volunteer tourism industry claims that volunteer tourists have more opportunity to interact with local people and learn current local culture while they are volunteering because volunteer tourism activities generally happen inside of local community. For that reason volunteer tourism is popular among those who want to immerse themselves in local culture and to build a deep relationship with locals. This is represented in the volunteer tourists' general characteristics. Studies say VT is appealing to the Generation Y since they tend to be more globally conscious (Conran, 2011), well-educated (Lee, 2011), highly motivated to travel overseas, and generally are open-minded (Kevin & Joanne, 2012). This is partially due to the expansion of globalization, gaining a sense of international understanding becomes a must have item for competency in their education and employment (Mayo, Gaventa, & Rooke, 2009). Due to this influence, volunteer tourists tend to pursue broadening their horizons through encountering local people and learning their culture during volunteer tourism (Lee, 2011; Chen & Chen, 2010; Brown, 2005; Kevin & Joanne, 2012).

Many studies and volunteer tourism organizations also alike tend to generalize volunteer tourists as 'the haves' (Kater, 2008), who are from the first world (Palacios, 2010; Kevin, and Joanne, 2012), such as UK, Canada, USA, and Australia where studies say the gap year program is booming. In terms of demography, a volunteer tourists' age varies from teenagers to seniors, with a majority being in their 20's (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Brown and Morrison 2003; Coghlan 2008; McIntosh & Zahra 2007; Stoddart & Rogerson 2004). The amount of participants in their 30s and 40s are also considerable (Andereck et al., 2012). In terms of gender, there were usually a greater number of female participants than male participants, (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Lee, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2011), with male participants ranging from 30% to 50%. Most volunteer tourists were found to hold a postsecondary degree (Campbell & Smith,

2006; Chen & Chen, 2011; Lee, 2011), while some of them had a high school diploma, master degree, or Ph.D. Volunteer tourists come from diverse work field with professionals such as university professors, post-secondary students, managers, teachers, high school students, researchers, and the retired (Campbell & Smith, 2006; Chen & Chen, 2011, Lee, 2011).

Studies also segmented volunteer tourists based on their motivation, and behavior. As suggested by Brown and Morrison (2003), studies distinguished volunteer tourists into volunteer-minded volunteer tourists and vacation-minded volunteer tourists depend on motivation and the amount time for volunteering during the trip (Chen & Chen, 2011; Brown, 2005; Brown & Morrison, 2003). Volunteer-minded volunteer tourists refer to those who purpose to volunteer abroad and devote most of their time on volunteering work (Brown, 2005). On the contrary, vacation-minded volunteer tourists spend little time on volunteer work during their leisure vacation (Brown & Morrison, 2003).

Yu (2010) segmented volunteer tourists by five motivations: escaping from daily routine, self-development, experiencing new culture and meeting new people, meaningful experience, and altruism. Yu (2010) found that VT motivations influenced their VT behavior. Yu (2010) clustered volunteer tourists into four groups depending on motivation; cluster 1 (tourism motivations were above the average but altruism was below the average), cluster 2 (those pursued meaningful experience and self-development), cluster 3 (five motivations were above the average), and cluster 4 (five motivations were below the average). The majority of people in cluster 1 preferred a one week long tourism-based voluntourism in the areas of construction or disaster relief in Europe. They were highly interested in experiencing local culture, local cuisines but were not interested in recreation, and shopping. Cluster 2 preferred to stay 2-3 weeks in an Asian country, and favored volunteer-based voluntourism in the area of disaster relief, education

and medical aid. They were interested in local culture, local festivals, and visiting historical sites but were not interested in visiting tourist sites or watching shows. Cluster 3 preferred 2-3 weeks of a volunteer program which consisted of an equal percentage of volunteer and tourism activities. They preferred to go Asia and were interested in all kinds of tourism activities. Cluster 4 preferred a one week volunteer program which consisted of an equal percentage of volunteer and tourism activities in the area of education. This group preferred Asia or Africa but did not have any preference for tourism activities.

**Residents described in previous studies.** Most of the VT research to date focuses on the volunteer tourists and few studies placed value on the residents of VT ( Guttentag, 2009; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Simpson, 2004; McGehee, 2012). Early volunteer tourism studies rarely demonstrated how locals served the volunteer tourists while volunteer tourists were staying in their area, how the residents interacted with volunteer tourists, or studied the commonalities between residents and volunteer tourists. For these reasons, much of the information about residents remains uncertain.

While no research has been conducted to profile residents in volunteer tourism (VT) existing research can be used to identify them. Residents can be considered as “people in the local community who host volunteers” (McGehee & Andereck, 2009; p. 40) or “residents who were regularly exposed to volunteer tourists” (McGehee & Andereck, 2009; p. 41). Some previous VT literature has also considered those residents to be local nationality staff, foreign staff of host VT organizations who reside in the host community (Raymond & Hall, 2007; Conran, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), volunteer service recipients, and other residents who live in the host community but do not receive direct services from VT organizations (McGehee & Andereck, 2009).

Despite the diversity among residents in the VT host community, voluntourism tends to describe residents as service recipients (see Sin 2009, Kevin, & Joanne, 2012). The definition of VT also implies the service recipient role of residents with volunteer tourists. McGehee and Santos (2005, p.760) mentioned the locals as the people in need in the definition of volunteer tourism saying “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need”. The character of residents in VT as service recipients can be the most obvious difference from the character of residents in general tourism who are regarded as the service providers for tourists, rather than as service beneficiaries. The difference may be because VT consists of volunteer activities that provide tangible benefits such as education, construction, and medical services to the host community. However, the passive description of the residents can create homogeneous and negative images residents.

As like residents are considered those who need help, the places where they live are also negatively portrayed. A quote from Save the Children Canada illustrates this;

For more than 40 years Colombia has suffered from civil war, poverty, insecurity, corruption and drug trafficking. Of its 45 million people, nearly 40% are children. In the last 20 years, four million people have been forced to leave their homes because of the fighting. Many end up living in shanty towns or on the streets, where they have little access to healthcare or education. Colombia is also one of the most inequitable societies in the world. Two-thirds of the population live below the poverty line. Generations of children have known only violence and poverty. Armed groups regularly recruit children. There are up to 14,000 child soldiers. Many children also face violence at home, as the burden of displacement and poverty leads to family breakdown, abuse and exploitation (Save the Children Canada webpage, 2012).

Table 2 displays the differences in the descriptions of residents in tourism studies in general and volunteer tourism studies.

**Table 2:*****The Comparison of Descriptions of Residents in tourism studies and volunteer tourism studies***

Residents in tourism	Residents in volunteer tourism
Generally positive, but diverse attitude toward tourism development exist (Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006).	Generally positive in their perception of volunteer tourists and activities (Conran, 2011, McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).
Residents offer specific hospitality to tourists (Trauer & Ryan, 2005; McNaughton, 2006).	Residents receive assistance to repair or construct structures or preserve vital resources (Woosnam, 2011).
Residents refer to the people who usually reside there (Trauer & Ryan, 2005).	Others in need (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing, 2001).

**Rethinking hosts and guests relationships.** In previous tourism research, the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents was primarily characterized by a dichotomous view: the 'host and guest', since this binary view's debut in (1977) by Smith (Smith, 1977; Woosnam, 2009; Woosnam, 2008; Wearing & Wearing, 2001). According to this view, the 'host' refers to the residents within the tourist area who provide services to the tourists, while the 'guest' refers to 'tourists' who arrive in the unfamiliar area to spend their vacation. However, the binaries are not free from colonial perspective (McNaughton, 2006). According to Amoamo (2011), it is "the process in which subordinate populations are misinterpreted or reinterpreted by mainstream populations in discourse and praxis; as a result, power relations are inherent within cultural discourse" (p. 1254).

This 'self' and 'other' dichotomy was applied to the VT studies (Campbell & Smith, 2006 ; Simpson, 2005; Simpson, 2004). Volunteer tourism studies distinguished between

volunteer tourism host communities using clear-cut boundaries such as the developed/the developing, the south/the north, the globally conscious volunteer tourists/ the needy residents (Campbell & Smith, 2006, Woosnam, 2010; Hughes, Monterrubio, & Miller, 2010). In the dichotomous descriptions, volunteer tourism research often showed a strong tendency to romanticize residents from the perspective of tourists from economically developed countries (Wearing & Wearing, 2006). By doing so, studies generalized and simplified volunteer tourism destinations, which, in turn created stereotypes and inequality in the status of residents and tourists (Wearing, 2001; Wearing and Wearing, 2006; Woosnam, 2008).

The self and other dichotomy in volunteer tourism studies has shortcomings. First, the perspectives produce an unequal relationship between volunteer tourists and residents. For example, the research barely pays attention to the service role, and the responsibility of residents in VT, despite the fact that a number of volunteer tourists highlighted the cooperation and support received from residents during their volunteer program (Palacios, 2010; Tomazos & Butler, 2012). Conversely, it places Western countries in a position of authority with the responsibility to care for other countries (Sin, 2010; Keese, 2011). Through this negligence, previous voluntourism literature tends to identify residents as those who do not take any responsibility for the development of their own communities. This assumption consistently marginalizes and disempowers residents in volunteer tourist hosting countries (Sin, 2010). Furthermore, this division makes it difficult to verify whether VT empowers residents and whether they conduct community projects in cooperation with volunteer tourists and residents.

Second, the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy stereotypically divide the world into praxis: 'the South and/or the East,' where residents require assistance from the developed first world, and 'the North and/or the West,' where residents are the globally responsible first world citizens (see

Conran, 2011; Broad, 2003; Benson 2006, ; Kevin, & Joanne, 2012; Palacios, 2010). By doing so, the West continues to hold the position of authority, and superiority in the global world. However, VT and international volunteerism is gaining popularity in many parts of the world such as Singapore (Sin, 2009, 2010), China (ex: UN Volunteers in China), and South Korea (Lee,2011; Choi, 2009; Yu, 2010). In addition, many local communities in developing countries work together with international volunteer tourists for their community development (see Ethiopia Global Project of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship; Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

Third, the 'host' and 'guest' perspective generates stereotypes about volunteer tourists and residents. For example, much literature describes guests as an ethnically diverse generation ( Kevin & Joanne, 2012), and as globally concerned (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2011) people from the developed world (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Meanwhile, 'hosts' are described as people with material poverty (Wearing, 2001) in a 'third world' (Simpson, 2004; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). This stereotypical perspective describes residents and volunteer tourists as homogeneous groups(i.e., the "haves" in first countries, and the "have nots" in so-called third countries). As a result, diversity among people in the volunteer tourism community, and similarities between residents and volunteer tourists are neglected. As well, "poverty becomes a definer of difference, rather than an experience shared by people marginalized by resource distribution" (Simpson, 2004, p. 688). This perspective results in misconceptions of poverty and a negative image of the economically developing world (Lyons et al., 2011). By doing so, the gap year industry creates an appealing image of the VT space for the sales (Simpson, 2005; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

Therefore, the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy may not be relevant when explaining the complex and interactive relationship between the volunteer tourist and local resident, as the

binaries in the volunteer tourism simplify complex social relationships, and constrain the diversity of the people (Myers, 2012). As tourism experiences are generated through interconnected interactions between tourists, residents, and the toured place, it is possible that volunteer tourists and residents may share similarities that can blur static boundaries and dispel commonly held stereotypes (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Woosnam, 2010b). Woosnam (2010b) argues that “if individuals share beliefs and behaviors and interact with one another—ultimately this can serve to reduce commonly held stereotypes of one another and even contribute to residents experiencing a degree of emotional solidarity with tourists” (p. 617).

**Theories applied to volunteer tourists-residents relationships.** There is a growing body of literature considering the engaged interactive relationship between volunteer tourists and residents, which is the apparent heart of the VT experience (Conran, 2011; Sin, 2010; Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). These studies researched the theory that VT brings about a positive relationship between volunteer tourists and residents, cross cultural understanding (Broad, 2003; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2011), emotional tie between volunteer tourists and residents (Conran, 2011, McIntosh and Zahra, 2007), and reconciliation between societies (Freya, 2006). Contact hypothesis theory and intimacy theory have recently been used in VT research to gain a better understanding of the complex relationship that exists between residents and tourists.

Intercultural interaction between cultural groups has received attention in tourism literature, often measuring tourists’ attitude change and reduction of prejudice toward a host group through contact hypothesis theory. Contact hypothesis theory suggests that contact between diverse or hostile inter-groups will result in ultimately enhanced mutual understanding about social and cultural backgrounds of the other, thus leading to an enhancement of attitude

and reduced prejudice, conflict and tension (Gyan, Victor, & Cody, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). In the theory, contact refers to “actual face to face interaction between members of clearly defined groups” (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, p. 254). The theory claims that contact acts as a significant mediator between the members of two groups to improve understanding toward other group and change their attitude (Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel 2000).

Contact hypothesis can predict stronger contact effects under the four assumptions that Allport (1954) emphasized as four conditions; 1) participants should be of equal status; 2) they should not be in competition with one another; 3) they should work interdependently to achieve common goals; and 4) contact should be supported by local authorities or institute. As VT programs provide intensive interactions between tourists and residents through volunteering for community development, contact hypothesis theory can be considered to have benefits to investigate the improved relationship between volunteer tourists and residents (see Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008; Otten, 2003; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000).

However, contact hypothesis theory has crucial flaws. Most of all, contact alone is not sufficient to improve mutual understanding and reduce prejudice. The assumption contrasts research findings suggesting that contact can, in fact, strengthen pre-held views (Simpson, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2007). Simpson (2005) suggested a case in which volunteer tourists deepen their stereotype like ‘poor but happy’ after a volunteer trip with a quote from a volunteer tourist: ‘The people here, because they don’t have so much, for us we expect a lot, but here they don’t have TV’s but it doesn’t bother them because they don’t expect one. (p. 687).

Besides, contact hypothesis theory does not account for the emotional closeness that develops between tourists and locals. Contact hypothesis theory suggests that interaction between members of different groups reduces prejudice, and enhances mutual understanding.

However, the change is primarily a psychological processes rather than emotional one (Gartner, man, Dovidio & Murrell 1990). In addition, contact effect is based on the experience of cultural or ethical otherness, and it does not always premise that the contact will bring about a common in-group identity. Therefore, contact hypothesis is not suitable to change the 'subjective' and 'objective' relationship between tourists and residents.

Intimacy theory has been applied to volunteer tourism research because volunteer tourism often involves intimate encounters between volunteer tourists and local people. Interpersonal authenticity is significant in the context of volunteer tourists' genuine relationships with local people and volunteer tourists (Conran, 2011; Cater, 2008; Cederholm & Hultman, 2010).

Under this theory, intimacy can be understood as socializing with others with emotional and/or intellectual intensity, which becomes aroused as participants intimately encounter others and create narratives about shared experiences (Conran, 2011; Cederholm & Hultman, 2010 ; Conran, 2011; Maksymowicz, 2010). Intimacy theory requires caring for another, being responsible to someone beyond the self. According to Trauer and Ryan (2005), a genuine relationship is "something emotional that is potentially profound, something that is 'real' rather than superficial, something requiring enduring Involvement (EI) rather than purely situational involvement (SI)" (Trauer & Ryan, 2005, p. 484). Trauer and Ryan further emphasized that if the embodied relationship experience does not involve other caring, the experience is usage, exploitative, rape rather than intimacy (Trauer & Ryan, 2004, p. 484).

The intimate relationship can occur within volunteer tourists who are like-minded people or who share meaningful relationships (Trauer & Ryan, 2004). However, Trauer and Ryan (2005) stated that it is difficult to have intimate relationships between residents and tourists. First, tourists may not provide care for the hosts, but exploit the hosts to gain a feeling of

closeness purely for self-focused benefits. Second, the host may disclose the sacred value of the place to the people who they do not trust but provide packaged intimacy experiences for self-focused benefits. The researchers further argue that although tourists buy the trust by employing “this bought trust is one of dishonesty with no real interest and care for the place that is sacred to the other/the host” (Trauer & Ryan, 2005, p. 482). In that, intimacy theory does not support the idea that tourists and residents can have the same in-group identity. This notion of the disconnect between tourists and residents is echoed in the research from Cederholm and Hultman (2010), who investigated how intimacy and distance in the interaction between hosts and guests is managed. The researchers defined the relationship between residents and tourists as situated friendship that is anonymous and nondurable; they cannot have a pure intimate relationship. Therefore, intimacy theory is not suitable for this research, as the research purposes propose to find the possible emotional closeness between volunteer tourists and residents.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework employed in this study is emotional solidarity. The theory suggests that shared beliefs, shared behavior, and interaction strengthen emotional solidarity, which can be interpreted as emotional closeness and sense of solidarity that binds individuals together as part of a group (Durkheim, 1915, /2001; Collins 1976; Woosnam & Norman, 2009).

In the context of tourism studies, this theory suggests that “degree of shared beliefs, shared behavior, and interaction between tourists and residents will significantly predict their emotional solidarity experienced with tourists visiting their community” (Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009, p.247). Woosnam suggested that ‘welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding are three dimensions or factors of emotional solidarity’ (Woosnam, 2010b, p.617-618).

Woosnam (2010a, 2010b, 2011) tested the context of the relationship between residents and tourists from both the tourists' perspective and the residents' perspective in Beaufort County, South Carolina, and Galveston County in Texas (Woosnam, 2011). These studies illustrated that residents and tourists share a number of similarities in their beliefs and, behaviors (e.g.; preservation of an area, participation in tourism activities), and that they interact positively with one another, resulting in emotional closeness, sympathetic understanding, and welcoming, which fosters feelings of unity (Woosnam, 2010a, 2010b). This result demonstrated the potential that tourists and residents can have the emotional solidarity, which can reduce stereotypes and improve understanding forged from commonalities (Woosnam & Norman, 2009; Woosnam, 2010b).

Emotional Solidarity theory was initially suggested by Durkheim (1915/2001). In his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, a study of the nature of the social mechanism, Durkheim declared that, according to the social system perspective, religion is an essential vital force in social stability. This is because all religions play a significant role bringing about attachment between the individuals of a community by providing two fundamental interdependent attributes which are a shared behavior arising from rite/ceremony (shared behavior) and formation of intellect (shared beliefs). In that the interdependent parts of a religious system, shared behavior and shared belief, are interconnected with each other and arose sense of solidarity among the members of a community which results in the integration, and stability of a society (Durkheim, 1915/2001).

According to Durkheim, religious rite or ceremony assembles individuals of a community to act in common. For example, during their church service, people in a church pray when it is necessary, and they bow or stand up at the same time when it is necessary. Through this shared

behavior, individuals feel the influence of society that they belong to, and even more the collective ideas and sentiments arise from the collective movement (Durkheim, 1915/2001). As well, religions produce a shared belief or state of opinion in a society by teaching members of a community that there are "a certain number of essential ideas which dominate all our intellectual life;...such as ideas of time, space, class, number, cause, substance, personality etc" (Durkheim, 1915/2001, p.11). Later, Collins (1975) introduced interaction in religion as the third elements that fosters emotional solidarity saying, "particular forms of social interaction designed to arouse emotions operate to create strongly held beliefs and a sense of solidarity within the community constituted by participation in these rituals"(p. 58).

Although emotional solidarity was not tested by Durkheim (Woosnam, 2008), the theory has been applied to a number of areas of study, such as sociology, political studies, family studies, and most recently, a few tourism studies. Especially, family studies have actively used and developed the emotional solidarity theory. Lowenstein and Daatland (2006) defined emotional solidarity as an emotional relationship and measured it by questioning the degree of emotional closeness, compatibility and communication. Jacobs and Allen (2005) conceptualized emotional solidarity as a feeling of solidarity that binds members of a group together, fostering a sentiment of group loyalty. Hammarstrom (2005) conceptualized emotional solidarity as the degree of bonding between members of a community which is characterized by emotional closeness and degree of contact. He/she measured emotional solidarity through the question of frequency of intergenerational interaction, formal and ritualistic contacts and informal contacts.

In tourism study, Woosnam adapted Durkheim's (1915/2001) theory and modified it to investigate potential emotional solidarity between residents and tourists in tourism destinations (Woosnam, 2008; Woosnam et al, 2009; Woosnam, 2010a; Woosnam, 2010b, Woosnam, 2011).

Woosnam found the logical fit in the application of the emotional solidarity theory in the characteristic of tourism in a social system (Woosnam, 2008, Woosnam et al, 2009).

According to systematic approach of tourism, tourism can be understood as a system just like a society because of a number of interdependent and interrelated actors of tourism working together to bring about balance and integration of tourism (Woosnam et al, 2009; Mill & Morrison, 2002). Tourism communities also can be regarded as systemic networks which interrelated components of tourism destination, such as residents, tourists, the tourism business firms, regional authorities, local economies, local community, tourism product, and service interact to produce tourism experience, tourism product and so on (Mill & Morrison, 2002; Woosnam, 2008). Among the factors, tourists and residents exist in tourism destinations as the primary players whose relationship can influence diverse aspects of the tourism community and even one's identity (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Woosnam 2008; Woosnam et al, 2009).

Wearing and Wearing (2001) argue that "self/other of tourist and host interact with each other with possibilities for enlarging individual psychic space as well as the social and symbolic space of communities and cultures" (p. 156). Through the process, the boundary between tourists and residents can be deconstructed while a sense of identification with others arises (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Raymond & Hall, 2007, McIntosh & Zahra, 2007, Conran, 2011). Therefore, residents and tourists are not separate beings, but coexist as a member of tourism communities (Woosnam, 2008, p. 2). Consequently, Durkheim's emotional solidarity theory can be applied to the relationship between residents and tourists.

Based on this assumption, Woosnam (2011) suggested that "as residents and tourists have shared beliefs, shared behavior and interact with one another, some degree of emotional solidarity will be forged between such individuals" (p. 617). In this theory, shared belief refers to

“common convictions or opinions accepted as truths among individuals (i.e., residents and tourists) regarding a particular phenomenon (primarily the geographic region)” (Woosnam, 2008 p.82). Shared behavior indicates “collective observable actions or reactions individuals (i.e., residents and tourists) performed in a given location” (Woosnam, 2008, p.17). In other words, shared behavior refers to participation in the same activities, at the same time such as dining at a local restaurant or visiting a tourist’s site. Emotional solidarity in the theory refers to the affective bonds individuals feel with one another, binding a group together (Woosnam, 2008). However, it does not require cooperation between the individuals to achieve a common goal (Woosnam & Norman, 2009). It is a feeling of solidarity that binds individuals together as part of a group (Durkheim, 1915/1976, Collins 1976, Woosnam & Norman, 2009). As well, emotional solidarity is different from acculturation or demonstration effect, because emotional solidarity implies a “sense of we together not as ‘tourists’ verses ‘residents” (Woosnam 2011, p.617), while acculturation and demonstration effect are about the value, attitudinal, and behavioral changes of individual due to influence of different culture /or more advanced culture (Seth, Jennifer, Byron, & Jose, 2010; Violet & Linda, 2008; David, 2004). The two concepts, acculturation and demonstration effect, in tourism studies get criticism mostly because the concepts consider locals vulnerable that one ought to protect (David, 2004, Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009).

Woosnam, Norman, and Ying (2009) investigated feelings residents have with tourists through focus group interviews in multiple locations in the US. During the process of development of the emotional solidarity scales, the researchers found three consistent factors and items of emotional solidarity; “(Welcoming nature) feeling residents appreciate the benefits associated with me as a visitor coming to the community, feeling residents appreciating visitors

for the contribution we as visitors make to the local economy, feeling proud to be welcomed as a visitor; (emotional closeness) feeling close to some residents I have met, having made friends with some residents, (sympathetic understanding) identifying with residents, feeling affection toward residents, understanding residents, having a lot in common with residents " (Woosnam, 2010b, p. 622).

To date, the emotional solidarity framework has been only applied to the residents and tourists in the US who share a similar culture (Woosnam, 2011; Woosnam, 2010a; Woosnam, 2011). As well, the emotional solidarity theory has not been applied to cases in which residents and tourists were from dissimilar cultures or within the context of volunteer tourism (Woosnam, 2010). However, there are a few findings from the volunteer tourism studies that are related to emotional solidarity such as welcoming nature, cross cultural understanding, identification with one another, and positive feelings toward locals.

McIntosh and Zahra (2007) investigated Australian volunteer tourists in a Maori community in New Zealand to examine an alternative and sustainable volunteer tourism experience, and found that volunteer tourists developed a significant understanding of the contemporary culture and values of the local community. This study showed that volunteer tourists significantly develop their understanding of the contemporary values of the local community, family values, culture, and history through engaging experiences (example: talking with people, visiting home, having conversations at dinner). Even more, the study showed that the discourse and welcoming experience made volunteer tourists reflect on their own culture, and made them feel more "like a New Zealander than an Australian" (p. 551). These findings were echoed in the statements of volunteer tourists in (Conran, 2011) indicating that the

residents' hospitality affected their understanding of the genuine culture of today's Thailand, and their sense of closeness and development of friendships with the locals.

Volunteer tourism studies have also found feeling of closeness that volunteer tourists develop with residents through interaction. Pizam, Uriely, and Reichel (2000) studied long-term volunteer tourists in Israel and found that, as volunteer tourists and residents had a higher intensity of interaction, the more positive feelings of these tourists toward their hosts arose. Raymond & Hall (2007) found that, as volunteer tourists spent more time in the local community and frequently interacted with local people, these voluntourists built closer relationships with the residents. Raymond & Hall (2007) suggested that, if the period of interaction is short, volunteer tourists consider their relationships to be memorable experiences rather than friendships. This finding was similar to the outcomes from the study "Trends in Family Space/Time, Conflict, and Solidarity: Middletown 1924-1999" (Bahr, Mitchell, Li, Walker, & Sucher, 2004) in that the space/time that children spent with parents had a significant influence on their emotional solidarity.

Shared beliefs between volunteer tourists and residents have received a little attention from academia, but can be found in some literatures. Such beliefs in volunteer tourism have taken the form of concern about volunteer tourism's impact on the local community, and the importance of religion in people's lives. Conran (2011) interviewed both international volunteer tourists and residents in Chiangmai and found that similar opinions regarding the characteristics of volunteer tourism existed in both believed that volunteer tourism is a more meaningful experience because its participants are able to meet locals, learn about the authentic culture, and build close relationships with the residents. Furthermore, both parties held the belief that

volunteer tourism activities would improve the economic development, and quality of life of the local community (McGehee & Andereck, 2009).

Unlike other constructs of emotional solidarity theory, shared behavior has received little attention. In the case of community development and volunteer tourism, the shared activities can include working in schools with local students, working in volunteer organizations, living with a family, doing household chores, or playing with and carrying children (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Sin, 2010; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007b). The evidence emotional solidarity, shared belief, shared behavior, and interactions from volunteer tourism studies are displayed on from Table 3 to Table 6.

**Table 3:*****The Evidence of Emotional Solidarities from Volunteer Tourism Studies***

Construct	Examples in literature	References
Welcoming Nature	Volunteer group received warm welcome  Participants are willing to learn, help, and share everything  I feel gratitude toward us	Palacios, 2010  McIntosh & Zahra, 2007  McIntosh & Zahra, 2007
Emotional Closeness	I feel attachment to volunteers/residents  It's kind of hard to leave them  I felt a lot of love and protection  I enjoyed genuine interaction  I have made friends with locals  I am happy with them  The most memorable experience is having friendship with residents/volunteers	Tomazos & Butler, 2012  Palacios, 2010  Tomazos & Butler, 2012  Vodopivec, & Jaffe, 2011  Palacios, 2010  Campbell & Smith, 2006  Conran, 2011
Sympathetic Understanding	I feel being trusted  I feel for residents/volunteers family  I understand the real life aspects of locals  I understand customs and tradition	Palacios, 2010  Palacios, 2010  Conran, 2011  Conran, 2011

**Table 4:*****The Evidence of Shared Belief from Volunteer Tourism Studies***

Construct	Examples in Literatures	References
Community Development	<p>Volunteer activities are beneficial</p> <p>Communities develop more facilities</p> <p>Volunteer activities provide worthwhile opportunities for community residents</p> <p>Activities can increase the quality of life</p> <p>A number of factors prevent young foreigners from helping effectively at Koto</p> <p>We hope to break out the poverty</p> <p>Volunteers/residents are supportive</p> <p>Volunteers/residents are passionate for community development</p>	<p>McGehee &amp; Andereck, 2009</p> <p>Sin, 2010</p> <p>McGehee &amp; Andereck, 2009</p> <p>McGehee &amp; Andereck, 2009</p> <p>McGehee &amp; Andereck, 2009</p> <p>Palacios, 2010</p> <p>Vodopivec, &amp; Jaffe, 2011</p> <p>Sin, 2010</p> <p>Coghlan, 2008</p>
Relationship	<p>The most memorable experience is having friendship with residents/volunteers</p>	<p>McIntosh &amp; Zahra, 2007</p>

**Table 5:*****The Evidence of Shared Behavior from Volunteer Tourism Studies***

Construct	Examples from Literature	References
Formal volunteering	Caring kitchen, babies, toddlers, older children Working in KOTO (A training centre) Working in schools/day care centre Working in community Supporting volunteer tourists/ residents	Tomazos & Burtler, 2012 Palacios, 2010 Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011 Vodopivec, & Jaffe, 2011 Tomazos & Burtler, 2012
Extracurricular activities	Having a field trip Visiting water park Having bowling game Watching culturally representing program; story telling, dancing, singing Visiting beach Sports night/social nights	Palacios, 2010 Palacios, 2010 Palacios, 2010 McIntosh & Zahra, 2007 Tomazos & Butler, 2012 Tomazos & Butler, 2012
Spare time	Visiting home Having dinner Participating tourist activities	McIntosh & Zahra, 2007 McIntosh & Zahra, 2007 Tomazos & Butler, 2012

**Table 6:*****The Evidence of Interaction from Volunteer Tourism Studies***

Construct	Examples in literatures	References
Where & When	Visiting his/her village Visiting/living his/her family Talking with one another Working with residents Participating in extracurricular activities	McIntosh & Zahra, 2007 McIntosh & Zahra, 2007 Conran, 2011 Tomazos & Butler, 2012 Palacios, 2010
Level of interaction	We had deep conversation We talked complicated things The interaction were informal, interactive, authentic	Palacios, 2010 Palacios, 2010 McIntosh & Zahra, 2007\

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

This study is intended to understand how volunteer tourists experience emotional solidarity between residents and tourists while they are participating in a volunteer tourism in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica by using emotional solidarity frame work.

Diverse factors should be considered to choose appropriate methodology. The important factors in a methodology selection are those relevant to the research questions themselves, time and budget constraints, setting of the research, and availability of researcher (Yin, 2009; Brown & Lehto, 2005; Campbell & Smith, 2006). As well, it is crucial to consider the cultural appropriateness of research method in the research field country (Garg, 2002; Nelson, 2010). Considering these factors, explorative qualitative case study approach was chosen to address the research questions.

#### **Rationale of the Qualitative Research Method**

I adopted a qualitative approach with the following reasons. First of all, this study intends to clarify how volunteer tourists feel about their relationships with residents from the volunteer tourists' perspective. It was considered that interviews, participant observation, and research diaries from the subjects of this study would enable the study participants to feel comfortable and to freely express their ideas, without losing their perspectives through top-down research methods. Second, the researcher believed that this study is in its exploratory stage. Although emotional solidarity theory was developed and tested by Woosnam (2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), this theory has not been applied to the area of volunteer tourism or to cases of residents and tourists from different cultures (Woosnam, 2010a). We have to consider the fact that there is

no proven scale of emotional solidarity in the context of international tourism (Campbell & Smith, 2006). Therefore, a quantitative research approach could be problematic.

Third, the number of international volunteer tourists working in Puerto Viejo was relatively small, therefore probability sampling, which depends on a large sample, was problematic for maximizing the utility of such assessment (Campbell & Smith, 2006; Patton, 1990). Last, qualitative research methods enable the researcher to understand the cultural characteristics of volunteer tourists and their volunteer tourism programs, which would be difficult to discover with other research approaches.

Some may argue that qualitative research is unreliable and not objective. However, researchers such as Miles and Huberman (1994) have suggested that the credibility of the qualitative method can be strengthened through rigorous techniques for data gathering and analysis, such as multiple data collection, methods triangulation, and analytical triangulation. In a situation in which outcome measurements have not been developed and tested, it is more appropriate to use a qualitative approach to gather information rather than a scale that has the merit of being quantitative but whose validity and reliability are unproven (Patton, 1990). Last, I tracked researcher bias through reflection prior to the study and discussion of the findings and analysis with the researcher's thesis committee members, who are the professors of the University of Manitoba.

### **Case Study Selection**

In terms of method, an exploratory case study was chosen to uncover volunteer tourists' perspectives on their relationships with residents. Case study can be defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth, using multiple sources of evidence in a triangulating fashion, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are

not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Case study was deemed as the most suitable research method for the following reasons. First, it enables the researcher to gain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of a specific phenomenon, such as volunteer tourists, residents, the volunteer tourism program, and the culture of the study site that will influence relationships (Yin, 2009). Case study approach is mainly used to answer “why” and “how” questions to allow researchers to deeply explore a specific event so that they can completely understand the research topic by observing the interacting relationships among variables (Creswell, 2007; Dooley, 2002; Ying, 2009). Last, this study tried to apply the theory of emotional solidarity to a new context, international volunteer tourism, to which the theory had not been applied.

Purposive sampling was used in order to select both the site and the individual participants. Purposive sampling can be defined as that “researchers intentionally select participants who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored” (Creswell & Clark, 2010, p.415). It is a useful sampling method in qualitative research, since it helps researchers to get a great deal of detailed information of central importance to the purpose of the research from relatively small amount of samples (Patton, 1990, p.169). Deciding the subject of this study was difficult given the different styles of volunteer tourism, cultural diversities, and great scopes of regions in volunteer tourism. Considering the purpose, scope, budget, time limit, accessibility, I selected Puerto Viejo as the study site.

## Study Setting.

### *Costa Rica.*

#### **Figure 2:**

#### ***Map of Central America (partial)***



[Source: Google Maps]

Costa Rica is located in Central America. As shown in Figure 2, it extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean Sea, Nicaragua to the North, and Panama in the Southeast. It has seven provinces: San Jose; Alajuela; Cartago; Heredia; Guanacaste; Puntarenas; and Limon where Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, in short, Puerto Viejo, is located. Costa Rica has consistently been among the top Latin American countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), ranked

62nd in the world in 2012 (United Nations Development Programme, 2013) partially because of decreasing inequality in income, health and education throughout the last decade.

Costa Rica is regarded as a successful country in poverty reduction and social welfare improvement. Poverty affected 48 percent of households in 1982; but by 2012, only 20.3 percent of households were estimated to be living in poverty (The World Bank, 2013). Some communities in Costa Rica, including Puerto Viejo, are still short of adequate schools and medical centers (Personal interviews). However, The World Bank stats that there is still a strong commitment on the part of the Government of Costa Rica to offer a wide range of social services to all walks of the population. For example, the country has provided free education and health services to the public, and its social indicators in the aggregate stands among the best in Latin America and in the developing world.

Costa Rica has been nicknamed “the happiest country in the world”, a distinction lauded twice, 2009 and 2012, by the New Economics Foundation(NEF), a British think tank that aims to measure the level of economic wellbeing in every country throughout the world (Ashely, 2009; NEF, 2012). A country’s “happiness” is calculated by measuring its progress toward embracing a “sustainable well-being” through three criteria: subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita (NEF, 2012). The image of “happiest country in the world” is actively used by Costa Rica to promote tourism, specifically attracting more ecologically-minded people who are interested in sustainable well-being and nature as exemplified by the new tourism campaign launched in the U.S. advertising “Costa Rica’s Million Dollar Gift of Happiness” and “No Artificial Ingredient” mottos.

Since late 1980s, Costa Rica has gained a reputation of a global destination for pleasure eco-tourism based on its natural resources (*Frohlick & Johnston, 2011*). Costa Rica is home to

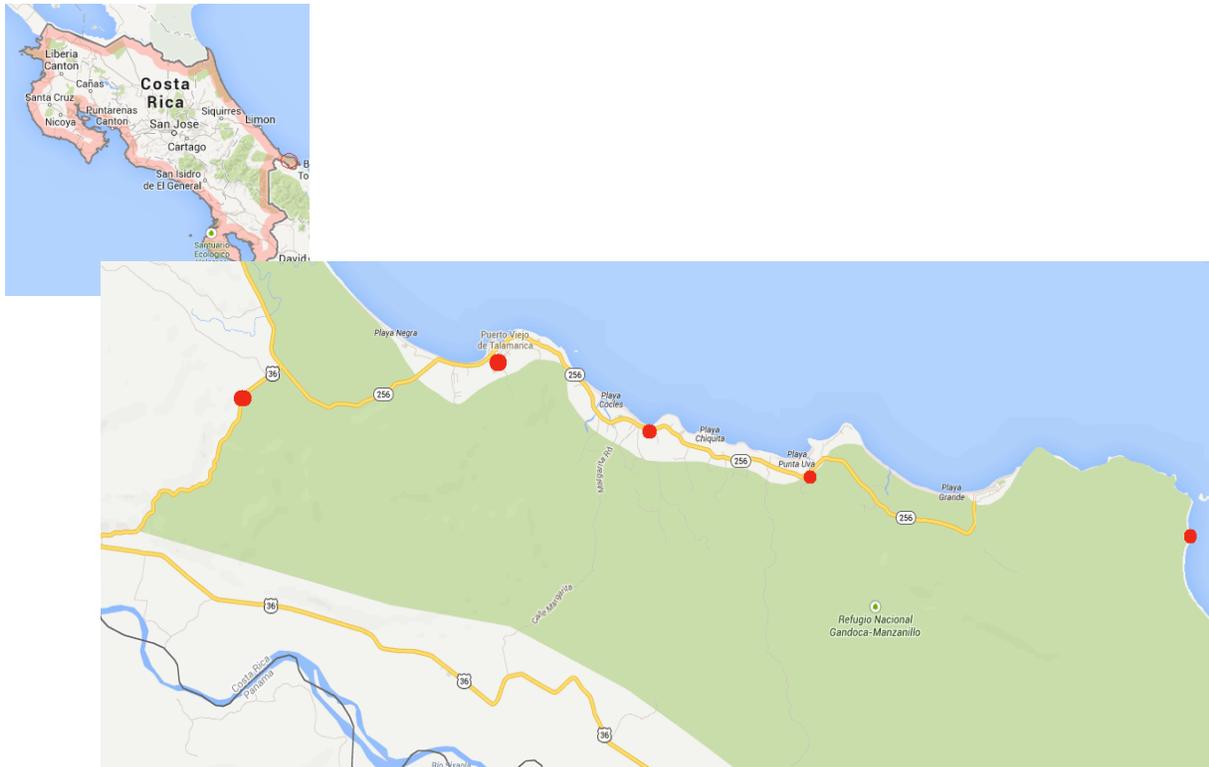
five percent of the existing biodiversity in the entire world, and 25.58 percent of the country is composed of conservation and natural protected territory (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, 2013). As such, the strategic use of “nature” has been central in developing the market in Costa Rica (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011). In 1994, the government ministry of tourism, Instituto Costarricense Turismo, launched a campaign called “No Artificial Ingredients” that created a national image of “paradise” through tropes of the untouched purity of nature (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011). From “No Artificial Ingredients” to “Pura Vida,” to being deemed the “World’s Happiest Country”, Costa Rica continues to live up to its description as “sunshine, beach, clean air and a much-needed detox, everyone’s always smiling and chanting, “Pura Vida, pure life”(Williams, 2012). With this national image, abundant natural resources, and diverse tourism activities, Costa Rica is a popular volunteer tourism destinations (Keese, 2011; Lee, 2011; Tomazos & Butler, 2009).

Costa Rica is a popular volunteer tourist destination. The number of volunteer projects in Costa Rica is rapidly increasing from 43 projects in 2003 to 353 in 2011 (Keese,2011; Tomazos & Butler,2009). Known as the destination for general pleasure, recreation or educational experience, and an exotic cultural experience, Costa Rica is attracting tourists who are looking for a fun, safe vacation or to volunteer their time and skills in a warm and friendly country (Flohlick & Johnston, 2011).

### *Puerto Viejo.*

**Figure 3:**

*Approximate Locations of Volunteer Organizations Participated in This Study*



[Source: Google Maps]

I conducted this research in the south part of Caribbean coast of Costa Rica including Patina, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, Punta Uva, and Manzanillo. In this research, this region is named as Puerto Viejo. Through travel media in North America and Western Europe, the Caribbean side of Costa Rica is described as attractive, “relaxing, and natural Caribbean getaway”, “pristine”, “tranquil”, “un-touched nature” and a “Disney-like” place (Lonley Planat, 2013; Eric, 2013). Limón has the highest percentage of protected land in Costa Rica, as well as a wide variety of flora and fauna. (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, 2012). Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge is located just at the end of the coastline, almost at the border with Panama. This refuge protects almost 4500 hectares of beaches and sea (Instituto Costarricense de

Turismo, 2013). The purported vibe in this region is laid-back, “Caribbean-style” with a great ethnic diversity. Open-air bars, various ethnic restaurants, and reggae music arose multi-cultural and bohemian atmosphere in this town (Flohlick & Johnston, 2011). The majestic, massive, and protected jungle, combined with Caribbean style attract a great number of tourists mostly from North America and Europe who want to immerse themselves in nature while enjoying yoga, surfing, and other out-door activities.

Tourists can also enjoy the culture and nature of this area through volunteering. There are a number of opportunities to experience indigenous life, culture, and nature. For example, Green Indigenous Territory, and Alta Community operate volunteer programs where volunteer tourists can learn about Indigenous culture while living in their communities. Volunteer tourists can learn about Jamaican immigrant culture while working at a Jamaican descendants’ restaurant. People who are interested in sustainable lifestyles can learn more while volunteering at Sustainable Education and Living Center (SELC) or Ego Farm, which are permaculture organic farms. Wildlife Conservation Center, which is chosen as the most popular tourist place in Puerto Viejo by Trip Advisor (Trip Advisor, 2012), provides volunteer tourist programs with opportunities to take care of injured wildlife animals such as monkeys and sloths. People who are interested in volunteer opportunities in this town can join the programs through Ecotourism and Conservation Tour Agency, Eco Tour, which is a non-profit travel agency, or a hostel operating Spanish classes, “Spanish Hostel” located in this town.

Another feature of Caribbean region of Costa Rica is the great diversity in ethnic, racial and national identities. The region’s diverse population includes English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans, nearly half of Costa Rica’s indigenous population, Hispanic-Costa Ricans, and expatriate North American Europeans, Asians, migrants from Panama and Nicaragua. This

diverse ethnicity resulted from agricultural crisis, international travel, and improved national transportation infrastructure (Erica, 2007). Prior to the 1750s there were only indigenous people in the Costa Rica Talamanca region. The isolation of the region and difficult geographical conditions allowed its inhabitants to safeguard most of their traditional ways of life despite Spanish colonization (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, 2013). Later, turtle fisherman came into this region from Bocas del Toro, Panama and Nicaragua during the fishing season (Erica, 2007). According to a Jamaican descendant who is in her 50s, this region added Jamaican culture, when Jamaican workers came for the railroad construction in Limón in 1890. They brought doctors, teachers, and plants from Jamaica to Puerto Viejo to keep their culture in their new home. For this reason, the region has unique flora only living in the Caribbean sur [Personal communication, December 15, 2012]. Around six descendants of the Jamaican immigrants recalled the time saying “there is no one other than Jamaicans and indigenous people here” [Personal communications, December, 2012 to January, 4].

Distance from San Jose and the difficulties of travel by narrow-gauge train and canoe kept coastal villagers isolated from national commerce until the late 1970s. An Afro-Caribbean man in his 60s told me that this region experienced huge change due to the first road connecting the villages to Limon in 1979. Right after the introduction of the road, the small villages experienced influxes of tourists, mainly white people, coming to the villages seeking pristine natural beauty and beaches [Personal communications, December 20]. Soon after, people living in the Talamanca region have developed opportunities to make a profit from tourism activities since 1980s (Darcie, 2008). People from Europe and/or North America were fascinated by the Caribbean side of Costa Rica and throughout the 1990s, Puerto Viejo became a town that operated in the interests and tastes of Europeans, white North Americans, and affluent white

Costa Ricans [Personal communications, December 20]. As foreign-driven building and population growth exploded after 1999, business ownership patterns have shifted away from Afro-Costa Ricans, who owned over 30 per cent of the small businesses in 1998 to fewer than 15 per cent in 2006 (Darcie, 2008).

Although there are on-going tensions between development and preservation, tourism business continues to be the driving economic force of this town. Residents, including permanent residents and second-home owners, contribute to the economics of the town by operating tourism businesses such as hostels, restaurants, tour agencies, and leisure activities. Retail shops such as grocery stores, laundry rooms, and clothing shops and taxis are also busy with residents and tourists. Plentiful yoga classes, and massage salons are attracting tourists who are drawn into the town. Some business sectors such as Eco Tour and Alta Community actively use tourism as sources of community development.

Despite diverse ethnic groups' contributions to the economy, there are obvious economic classes by race. Europeans and Americans in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, own most businesses, and their businesses are mostly located on the main road, whereas indigenous people, or Ticos, are hired for low-income jobs. Some non-white ethnics have their own businesses, but in most cases their businesses are located in the back of town. In spite of the growing tourism business and extensive history of community resource management and development (Gump 2001; Frantz 2003), the Talamanca region remains the most impoverished in Costa Rica.

### **Data Collection**

International and cross-cultural short-term qualitative research can easily be harmed by misinterpretation and miscommunication (Patton, 1990). One way to increase reliability and credibility of qualitative data collection is multiple data collection, which also has the advantage

of data triangulation (Yin, 2009). The primary collection was in the form of interviews. Secondary methods included participant observations and journals from research participants.

**Recruiting process.** Interview, participant observation, and diaries were conducted between 29<sup>th</sup> of November to 4<sup>th</sup> January in Puerto Viejo. In total, sixteen volunteer tourists participated in this study. A total of sixteen face-to-face interviews were conducted and five study participants handed in their journals for this study.

In order to collect data from volunteer tourists, a primary step is to gain access with gatekeepers and build rapport with the individuals, as they have the authority to provide access, provide permission for the research, have knowledge of the study site, and can influence the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this study, there were multiple formal gatekeepers whom I needed to negotiate the access including staff of the volunteer organizations. Dr. Susan Frohlicks, a professor at the University of Manitoba; and Susie and Alice, residents of Puerto Viejo, provided support to gain access.

During the field research, I approached volunteer organizations that hosted international volunteer tourists whose age was above eighteen years old while accompanied by Susie or Alice. After I, Susie, or Alice contacted volunteer organizations in the study site by phone, I visited the volunteer organizations in order to introduce myself, introduce the research topic, explain the purpose of the research, the role of research participants, and request permission. Once the staff of the volunteer organization provided permission to the study, I joined the organization as an international volunteer tourist and as a participant observer.

While I was working as a volunteer, I approached other volunteers in order to invite them to be a part of this study. During the recruiting process, I introduced myself, described the study purpose, and asked simple screening questions, such as whether she/he was over eighteen years

old, whether they are able to speak English, and whether they were not from Costa Rica. Once the volunteer tourists agreed to participate, a formal informed consent letter was presented to them to inform them about the study and their rights. The consent form was reviewed and signed by the individual volunteer tourists. Research diaries were distributed to each study participants. In total sixteen volunteer tourists participated in face to face one-on-one interview. Each semi structured interview took place between 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

Once I got the permission from individual volunteer tourists, I conducted participant observations at public places during and after official volunteer hours while volunteering and/or living with other staff and volunteers. I volunteered with thirteen study participants at five volunteer organizations and hung out with them visiting beaches, bars, hiking trails, and restaurants during the field research. I stayed with six study participants at the same hostel for between one week and three weeks.

**Interview.** The interview allowed volunteer tourists who agree to participate in this study to share their perspectives about their relationships with residents. All of the interviews in this study were conducted in English with semi-structured face-to-face interviews for the following reasons. First, a semi-structured interview enables the researchers to clarify questions and later probe for answers (Babbie, 1990; Rattan, 2009), so that the researcher can easily deepen the response to questions to increase the richness of the data (Patton, 1990). As well, a semi-structured interview increases credibility, since researchers can standardize the interview instrument (Patton, 1990).

The questions for the interviews were based on the purpose of the paper, which was to explore relationships between volunteer tourists and residents. Questions were open-ended in order to gain in-depth responses. A range of questions was designed to include probing

questions, clarification, and follow-up questions in order to encourage participants to talk in-depth about possible emotional solidarity.

Key questions included the meaning of volunteer tourism, relationships, commonalities and differences, and interactions. The questions were: “What are the main reasons for your trip to Puerto Viejo?”; “Why did you decide to volunteer during your vacation?; “How would you describe your relationship with residents?”; “Would you please tell me what are the similarities and differences between you and residents in Puerto Viejo?”; and “Would you please describe the interactions you have with residents during your volunteering?”

In total, sixteen volunteer tourists participated in face to face one-on-one interview. Each semi-structured interview took between 30 and 90 minutes. During the interview, questions on the demographics of study participants, volunteer experience in Puerto Viejo, interactions with residents, and perceptions toward Puerto Viejo were asked. Each interview was recorded on a voice recorder, depending on the permission of interviewees. Collected data from the interviews was compared to other data collected from participant observations and research diaries study participants wrote, for the purpose of data triangulation (Yin, 2009; Cresswell, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002).

**Participant observation.** Participant observation was chosen primarily to gain insights about the volunteer tourism program and to collect descriptions of shared behavior and interactions between volunteer tourists and residents. Participant observation can provide the researcher with the following advantages: Participant observation can be a useful method to gain the descriptive and in-depth resources; participant observations also enable researchers to check on what is reported in interviews, so that possible personal bias, influence of emotional state, and recall error can be reduced (Patton, 1990); and participant observation enables the researcher to

understand the natural setting while reducing the harm in studying by interacting with the people on the volunteer project, observing relationships, and learning the culture of the host community (Myers, 2012).

I conducted participant observations during and after official volunteer hours at each organization. I volunteered with thirteen study participants at five different volunteer organizations and hung out with them visiting beach, bars, hiking trails, and restaurants during the field research. I stayed with six study participants at the same hostel for about one week to three weeks. I observed most of volunteer tourists got a long with their peers such as their co-volunteers or those who stay in the same hostel.

During the participation, observations made by the researcher were kept in a notebook which had a lock on it to remind participants it was confidential at all the time, and it was written in Korean. Observations happened during official program hours and non-official hours. Observation focused on shared behavior, interaction, observable relationships between the locals and the volunteers, and conversation that provided insight about the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents.

During break time or when I was away from the research participants, I constantly wrote what I saw in my research notes in detailed and chronologically organized way. The notes included jots, mapping, anticipation drawn from the theory of emotional solidarity, and analytical insights in order to improve the quality of data collected and quality of the analysis (Patton, 1990). The observations focused on the number of volunteer tourists involved, number of residents involved, their behavior, non-verbal communication, locations, pattern of interaction, performed actions, sharing physical space between residents and volunteer tourists, frequency of interactions, and frequency of communication that had not occurred, which could

provide rich and detailed information of the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002; Patton, 1990).

The researcher took notes following each interview about the physical observations regarding age, mood of the participant, flow, and physical environment of the interview setting. The notes were written as field notes as soon as possible after the event took place, during break times, and at the end of the day. As Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) suggested, personal impressions and concerns also were written for self-reflection.

**Documents.** The researcher used a research journal as a resource for data collection. This research method was adapted from McIntosh and Zahra (2007) in order to gain in-depth information regarding volunteer experience, and volunteer tourists' relationship with residents from the perspective of the volunteer tourists. During participation in the volunteer tourism program, volunteer tourists were asked to keep research journals documenting their feelings about the community, volunteer experience, interaction with the residents, and activities in which they had participated with residents and other tourists.

### **Data Analysis**

When I reached data saturation, I stopped data collection. I found similar patterns among the study participants in regard to their perceptions of Puerto Viejo, motivation, and relationships with people in Puerto Viejo. Hence, I stopped recruiting new study participants for interviews. Meanwhile, I conducted participant observations every day throughout my fieldwork from November 29 to January 4 due to changes in setting. Almost every day, new people came into the hostel and/or volunteer organizations, and some people left. Due to the changes, it was necessary to keep recording the behaviors of study participants until I found behavior patterns.

Interview, field notes, and research journals were used to analyze the data. Information drawn from the different sources was compared for consistency and cross-checked to triangulate the findings in order to enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative data analysis. For triangulation, field notes, interview, and research journals each was analyzed independently.

The first step in the analysis was to transcribe the data. I first made sure all field notes, interview, and research journals were collected and then transcribed the data independently into a Microsoft Word document.

The second step in the analysis was to code the data. I used systematic coding via content analysis. One of the objectives of this study was to expand or refute the theory of emotional solidarity suggested by Woosnam, and to explore emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and residents. In order to accomplish these research objectives, I purposefully chose preconfigured codes based on Woosnam's study such as emotions/feelings for residents, shared beliefs between residents and tourists, and interactions.

I used preconfigured codes, but was open to using additional codes emerging during data analysis in order to capture all the important information expressed by the volunteer tourists. Once I compiled all the data, I continued to read the transcribed interview, field notes, and research journals, in order to immerse myself in the details, and get a sense of the entire database before sorting out the data (Creswell, 2007). I made comments such as short phrases, ideas, and key concepts in the margins of each document in order to discover themes. Through this process, motivations, identity, and differences between volunteer tourists and residents were found.

Once I uncovered the themes, I summed- them up in a few words in order to view quickly what had been stated in the data (Patton, 1990); after the themes were developed, I compared the transcribed data with the themes. Later, I started coding the data through line-by-line analysis of

the transcriptions. This process included writing the abbreviated themes directly in the margins near the relevant data (Patton, 1990). Following this, I assigned the themes to relevant categories that had been developed, based on the construction of the theory of emotional solidarity, from works done by Woosnam (2008, 2010a, 2010b). When a theme emerged, it was included in category development.

Once the coding was completed, I established a data index. I also reported the results chronologically based on the coding and review of the documents. Categorical aggregation (Yin, 2009) was used in the report to describe directly the volunteer tourists' emotional solidarity and interaction with residents.

In order to increase the reliability of this study and decrease bias, I conducted cross-check analysis with a peer group. Five students from University of Manitoba from non-tourism areas coded the interview transcriptions independently. Before starting, I introduced the research purpose and discussed the major points of the study that I wanted to examine. Identifiable information; such as the name of participants, name of organizations, and ages, were removed from the transcriptions. The peer group conducted analysis independently with coding. After coding, I and the peer group discussed findings. Peer group provided their ideas like whether information was highlighted into categories and whether new themes were developed.

Later I compared the results from my analysis. As a result, information related to volunteer tourists' perceived identity, perceptions toward Puerto Viejo, and volunteer tourists' perceived relationship with people in Puerto Viejo was found.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to the requirement of the Tri-Council Policy Statement, researchers who conduct research involving humans should get approval from the Canada Federal Research

Agency including the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

This research proposal was submitted to the ethics committee approval obtained before starting data collection.

During the data collection, all the study participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdrawal, confidentiality, and the risk of the research as written on the Informed consent (Appendix B).

Although there was no feasible physical risk during the research, the study participant could possibly experience anxiety, stress, or anger. The presence of the researcher during their volunteering could cause them to feel pressured. Interviews about their behavior, and interactions or emotional relationships with the residents could be seen as judgment of their attitudes toward the volunteer tourism program, and could lead to anxiety. In addition, the dual role of the researcher, as both a researcher and a volunteer tourist could cause conflicts or affect the relationship between the researcher and the participants. These potential problems were disclosed in the informed consent. The researcher also discussed possible problems with the staff of the volunteer tourism organizations, and got their consent for the researcher's participation in the research.

### **Validity of the Study**

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative validation refers to the "attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (p. 206). In order to establish the validity of the study, I employed several strategies. First, I engaged in prolonged field time with research respondents, building rapport and learning the culture of the host community and the volunteer tourists. Second, I employed data triangulation. Third, detailed descriptions were used to present objective findings. Fourth, this research used peer group

debriefing and bias clarification. As qualitative studies rely heavily on personal interpretation, the study cannot be completely free from previously held views. However, to achieve quality research, I “should attempt to make these biases as explicit as possible so that others may use these in judging our work (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002).” The researcher’s bias, discussed below, will help the readers to clarify any bias that the researcher has brought to this study.

Besides clarifying bias, the researcher used peer group debriefing in order to ensure that my study is understandable to readers. The research was reviewed by my thesis committee members, and my supervisor. The personal committee organized by the researcher to review the entire project includes staff from an international development agency, Caucasian Canadian university students, and a Korean literature professor.

**Clarifying bias.** In 2010, I attended a seminar at the University of Manitoba that was hosted by an international development organization. A large drawing showing the silhouette of the African continent was displayed at the gate. Several pictures of Asia and South America were arranged next to the noticeably large sized drawing of the African continent. Although the seminar was for international development, no North American or European regions were pictured, despite the fact that, for example, a number of Aboriginals living on reserves are suffering from health issues, and number of homeless is increasing in some of the countries (Wilson & Cardwell, 2011).

It seemed that Canada wanted to describe Asia, Africa, and South America as the poor regions on Earth that do not have their own ability, but are awaiting help from non-professional students in Canada. Initially I was angered by this disrespectful and homogeneous description of the three continents. I felt the differences in history, society, and economy of the regions were dismissed, and exploitation perpetrated by North America disregarded. Later, it reminded me of

the Japanese colonization of my country, Korea; Japan portrayed Koreans as savages who needed Japan's help in order to develop their country (Gwon, 2005). From this point, I got interested in the perspective of the volunteer tourists towards residents, and began to research in this area for my master dissertation. For that, my perspective can be critical.

## Chapter Four

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This study adapts and applies the theory of Emotional Solidarity suggested by Woosnam in order to explore the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents with respect to volunteer tourists' perspective. Emotional solidarity can be interpreted as emotional closeness and sense of solidarity that binds individuals together as part of a group (Durkheim, 1915, 2001; Collins 1976; Woosnam & Norman, 2009). Woosnam suggested that degree of shared beliefs, shared behavior, and interaction between tourists and residents will significantly predict their emotional solidarity experienced with one another in a community (Woosnam, 2009). Based on this theory, a qualitative research was conducted to investigate these issues in the context of Costa Rica.

Three research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1) What are the social relations that are formed between residents and volunteer tourists in practice in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica?
- 2) How do volunteer tourists identify themselves within their relationship with residents?
- 3) What commonalities and differences do volunteer tourists express they have with residents in Puerto Viejo?

Data reported in this section follow the order of: description of participants, overview of themes and categories, and description of responses (identity, perceptions of others, and relationship).

### Profile of Study Participants at the Time of Their Trip

The results include data related to sixteen study participants. Table 7 illustrates the profile of the sample and briefly displays their demographics such as age, sex, education, and their nationality.

**Table 7:**

*Demographic of study participants*

Age		Sex		Education		Continent	
18 – 21	4	Female	8	High school diploma	3	Europe	9
22-26	6	Male	8	Upper secondary degree	13	North America	6
26-30	3	-				Central America	1
30's	3	-					
Total	16	Total	16	Total	16	Total	16

At the time of their volunteer tourism trip, the sixteen participants ranged in age from 18 to 32 with the majority between ages 22 to 26. Studies show females as more likely to participate in volunteer tourism, and overall, 60 to 80 percent of volunteer tourists are female (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Lee, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). However, the same number of female and male volunteer tourists participated in this study. At the time of the field-work, the volunteer organizations participating in this study hosted similar female to male ratios of volunteer tourists.

The participants were well educated: three were in a gap year after completing their high school education, six were about to graduate from their university, and seven held university degrees and had professional jobs in their home countries.

In terms of nationality, five study participants were from the United States and five study participants were from Germany followed by Holland (1), Switzerland (1), Belgium (1), Slovakia (1), Mexico (1), and Canada (1).

**Table 8:*****Study Participants' Volunteer Experience***

Volunteered at home country		Volunteer Tourism Experience	
Yes	11	More than one time	2
No	5	Once	3
		No	10
		No Response	1
Total	16	Total	16

Table 8 presents study participants' volunteer experience. Eleven out of sixteen participants had volunteer experience in their home country in some capacity. The duration of their local volunteering experience ranged from a few days at their school to four years at an organization. Five study participants had volunteer tourism experience prior to visiting Costa Rica in 2012, which could influence their expectations of their experience in Costa Rica. Three study participants volunteered abroad in one country, and two interviewees participated in volunteer tourism more than twice (respectively Kenya, Australia, Indonesia and India). Ten study participants stated that they do not have previous volunteer tourism experience, and one did not respond to the question. For volunteer abroad, one used a volunteer abroad organization, one joined a school program, one was part of a church program, and two found organizations in their tourism destinations by themselves using the internet.

**Table 9:*****Study Participants' Travel Experience in Costa Rica***

Have been to Costa Rica		Length of Stay in Costa Rica at the time of the Interview		Length of Stay in Puerto Viejo de Talamanca	
Yes	5	Less than a month	6	Less than a month	9
No	11	1 month to 3 month	5	1 month to 3 month	4
		More than 3 month	5	More than 3 month	2
Total	16	Total	16	Total	16

As presented in table 9, the range of study participants' experience in Costa Rica was diverse. Five of the study participants had visited Costa Rica prior to the volunteer tourism that they were doing at the time of the interview. Among the five, one study participant had visited Puerto Viejo, and other one study participant had volunteered for the same volunteer organization prior to his visit in 2012. Other study participants had visited Costa Rica for their leisure travels, or on student exchange program in their high schools.

The total time spent in Costa Rica ranged from a few days to over five months. Ten study participants stayed in Costa Rica for over a month, and six study participants stayed in Costa Rica for less than a month. There are differences in numbers of study participants between the length of stay in Costa Rica and in Puerto Viejo, because a number of study participants had travelled to different places in Costa Rica. For example, two Macaw conservation organization volunteer tourists stayed in Costa Rica about four months volunteering, but they visited the Caribbean region for a week to release parrots.

**Table 10:*****Major Motivations Identified by Study Participants***

Motivation	Motivation Factors	Comments from study participants
Travel	Travel (10) Exotic (8) Escape (5) Gap Year (4) Relaxation (3)	“I want to travel. I really like traveling.” “Costa Rica is exotic and something different.” “The reason was to get out of normal everyday life.” “I wanted to take a gap year.” “I wanted to kind of de-stress from my stressful job.”
Personal Growth	Learning Language (8) Career (7) Self -Development (2)	“I wanted to learn the language.” “I really wanted to do this kind of job later.” “I need a big change in my life.”
Nature	Working with Animals(3) Be in the Nature (5)	“I wanted to work with animals, especially monkeys.” “I like to be in a beautiful place, organic food, and contact to the nature near the beach the jungle.”
Cultural	Meeting New People (3) Learning Culture (2)	“I wanted to meet people hopefully interested in same thing.” “I am getting to know the country and people live here.”
Contribution	Contribution (2)	“You can do a lot to develop the country.”

Table 10 describes major motivations identified by study participants. Sixteen study participants were asked to provide their five top reasons to come to Costa Rica, and to choose to

volunteer during their vacation. As a result of the interview, tourism motivation was found as the strongest motivation to attract volunteer tourism in Costa Rica, followed by personal growth, desire to be in the nature, cultural motivations and contribution intentions. Table 10 presents the study participants' volunteer tourism motivations. Except for two people, fourteen study participants stated tourism motivation as their primary reason to come to Costa Rica such as desire to take a travel, exploring the exotic culture and nature of Costa Rica, escape from daily routines, and relaxation.

Personal growth was another important motivation that led study participants to Puerto Viejo. This motivation includes learning language, gaining their job-related skills and knowledge, and self-development. Seven study participants mentioned volunteering is a good way to improve their Spanish ability, and one from Mexico said she wants to practice her English while working with her managers from the USA. Seven study participants appealed their desire to pursue their career based on their volunteer experience in Costa Rica. Two study participants mentioned that they want to change their lifestyle from consumerism to eco-friendly lifestyles.

Eight study participants mentioned the nature of Costa Rica as a pulling motivation. Eight study participants stated that they found the jungles, beaches, and exotic animals interesting and wanted to have the chance to be connected to the nature. Among the eight study participants, five study participants specifically only mentioned about the jungles and beaches, other three volunteer tourists mentioned the opportunities to work with wildlife animals.

Altruistic motivations were rarely mentioned by two study participants. Two study participants clearly stated that they chose to come to Costa Rica for volunteering because they

wanted to help the people, or help wildlife. Cultural aspects of motivation such as meeting new people, and learning about culture were mentioned by only by few study participants. .

### **Overview of the Themes and Categories**

A number of key themes emerged from data: volunteer tourists' perceived identity, volunteer tourists' perception towards Puerto Viejo and its people, and the relationship between volunteer tourists themselves and people in Puerto Viejo. Overall, it was dominant that volunteer tourists make distinctions between themselves and others.

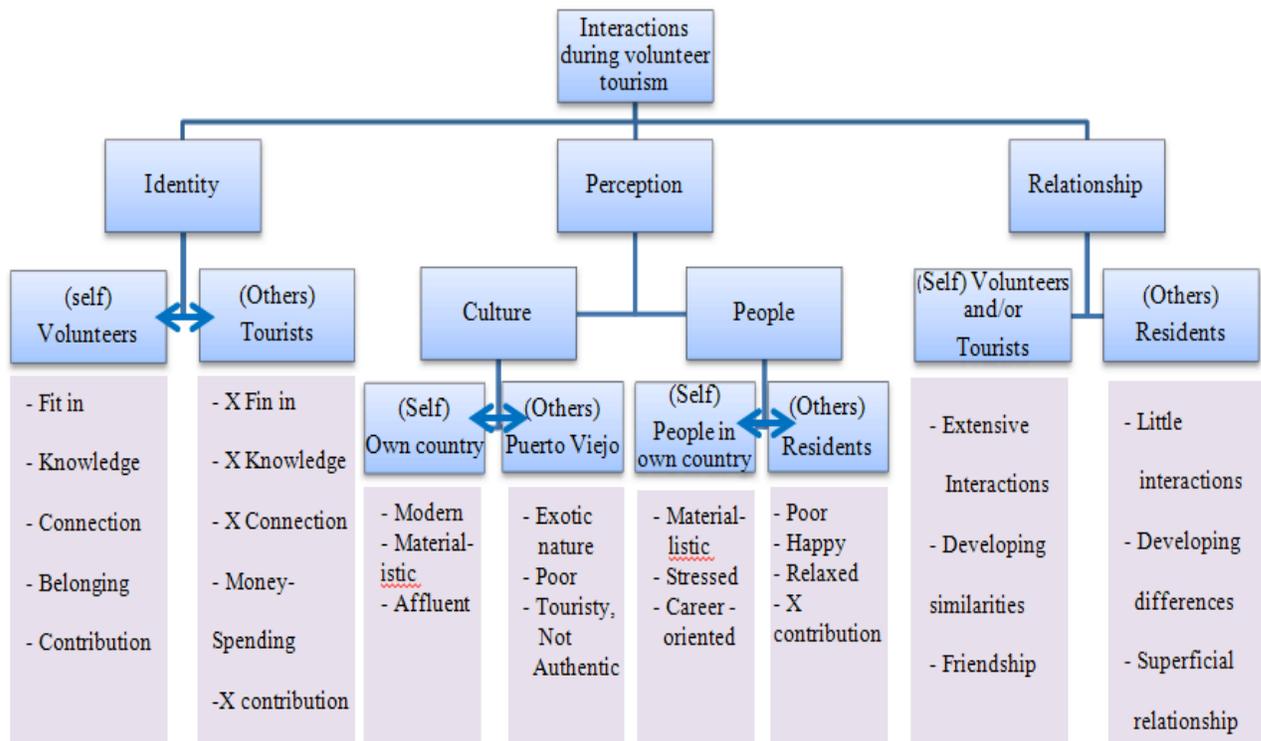
First, the study participants identified themselves as volunteers as opposed to tourists. Study participants distinguished volunteers and tourists based on interaction with local community, and volunteering. Study participants explained that volunteers are making changes into the community through volunteering, and are integrating into the community through intensive and genuine interactions with local residents.

Second, volunteer tourists developed binary perspectives between Puerto Viejo and their own culture. Volunteer tourists developed their perceptions toward Puerto Viejo based on their pre-perceived images such as exotic nature, poor economy, and happy people. These images of Puerto Viejo were in contrast to their own country; which is, according to study participants, developed, modern, and stressful.

Third, most of the volunteer tourists had distant relationships with residents in Puerto Viejo mostly due to short encounters, and language barrier. Volunteer tourists tended to develop closer relationship with foreign staff in volunteer organization who had similar language and/or cultural background with themselves, but had difficulties to build relationships with residents from Costa Rica.

These findings are briefly explained using tables in three sections; findings from interview, findings from participant observation, and findings from the journals. Figure 4 represents the collective findings of all data collection methods.

**Figure 4:**  
*Diagram of Research Findings*



**Theme 1; Identity.**

*Identity as volunteers.* The theme of identity emerged strongly in the responses during interviews. The volunteer tourists claimed that they are different from tourists because of their status as volunteers and their interactions with the local residents. The distinction between volunteers and tourists was a very important part of their identity construction. Table 11 summarizes the themes and references from the interviews.

**Table 11:*****Study Participants' Identity toward Themselves***

		Themes	References from the Interview
I am a volunteer, not a tourist	Interaction	Knowledge on Puerto Viejo	<p><i>"I can see the behind of the scene."</i></p> <p><i>"I get to know the history of the community."</i></p> <p><i>"I get to know the local culture."</i></p>
		Connections with Residents	<p><i>"Volunteering helps me to communicate with local people."</i></p> <p><i>"Volunteering helps me to build relationship with local people."</i></p>
		Sense of Belonging	<p><i>"I feel Puerto Viejo is my home."</i></p> <p><i>"Locals recognize me."</i></p> <p><i>"I speak their language, and work, and live with locals."</i></p>
	Volunteering	Contribution	<p><i>"I can help with projects."</i></p> <p><i>"I am contributing to this place (Puerto Viejo)."</i></p>
		Meaningful	<p><i>"I don't only do travel ...do something so when I leave here I think 'oh I did something'."</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't want to do just travel but I wanted to do something meaningful."</i></p>

**Identity of tourists.** While study participants perceived themselves as volunteers who fit into the community, they perceived tourists simply as consumers who do not associate to the local community but enjoy their holidays by themselves (see Table 12).

**Table 12:**

***Study Participants' Perceptions toward Tourists***

	Themes	References from the Interview
Tourists are...	No Integration	Lack of knowledge on community <i>"Tourists don't have a good impression about their destinations."</i> <i>"Tourists do not know about the real life of local community."</i>
		No Connections with residents <i>"Tourists keep distance from local people."</i> <i>"Tourists get along with tourists but not locals."</i>
	Spending Holiday	Money Spending <i>"Tourists spend money for traveling."</i> <i>"Tourists do tourists thing such as going to bar, restaurants, beach, etc."</i> <i>"Their relationship is based on money."</i>
		No Contribution <i>"Tourists dump garbage on the street."</i> <i>"Tourists don't contribute."</i>

**Theme 2; Perceptions toward Puerto Viejo.**

**Perceptions toward environment.** Interviews and research diary revealed how volunteer tourists perceive Puerto Viejo and its people. Most of the study participants made distinction between themselves and the residents. Volunteer tourists perceived residents at Puerto Viejo as exotic people who have little in common with volunteers.

In general, Study participants perceived the image of Puerto Viejo as a multi-cultural and poor town with plentiful beaches, exotic animals and plants, where people are relaxed. Table 13 and Table 14 demonstrate how volunteer tourists perceived Puerto Viejo and their own culture. This has been done using the data from study participants' diaries and interviews.

**Table 13:**

***Study Participants' Perceptions toward Puerto Viejo***

	Images	Themes	References from Diary and Interviews
Exotic	Nature	Beach	<i>"I love sunny days. I spent several hours at the beach. I like this beautiful place more and more!"</i>
		Jungle	<i>"It's a great place to explore the natural environment; eat the luscious, nutritious and diverse food here."</i>
		Exotic Animals	<i>"It is very colorful about the vegetation and animals."</i>
	Culture	Touristy, not authentic Not authentic  Relaxed	<i>"I feel this is very touristic centric town and not so real." "It is a melting pot...but not the true culture Costa Rica." "Puerto Viejo is chill, people aren't in a rush. Things may take a little bit more time than we are used to in Europe."</i>
Economy	Poor	<i>"There is poverty ...They can just offer rice and beans for diner."</i>	

These study participants thought of their countries as rich and affluent but plagued by consumerism and a stressful lifestyle. Table 14 describes how the study participants perceived their culture.

**Table 14:*****Study Participants' Perceptions toward the Environment in their country***

Environment in their country	Images	Themes	References from Diaries and Interviews
	Nature	Away from Nature	<p><i>“Germany is just crowded 24 hours with cars and people. [Here is no people] so that is really different.”</i></p>
	Culture	<p>Career-Oriented</p> <p>Stressful</p>	<p><i>“People in Belgium are busier with achieving goals. They try to achieve so many things. They are so stressed.”</i></p>
	Economy	<p>Developed</p> <p>Consumerism</p>	<p><i>“In Germany, everything is in order and there are good houses. Road[s] are very well paved.”</i></p> <p><i>“we always try to get more and buy more things. Here is so simple.”</i></p>

***Perceptions toward people.*** Volunteer tourists perceived local residents as exotic people who have little in common with themselves. While volunteer tourists considered local residents of Puerto Viejo as poor but happy and relaxed people, they considered their nationalities as stressed and career-oriented people. When asked about the commonalities between them and general local residents, almost all of the study participants had difficulties to come up with commonalities. Table 15 describes major themes that study participants perceived as the differences between themselves and the local residents.

**Table 15:*****Differences between Study Participants and Residents in Puerto Viejo***

	Groups of People	Themes	References from the Interview
Differences	Residents in general	Poor economy	<i>“Poor”</i> <i>“Away from consumerism”</i>
		Happy and Relaxed lifestyle	<i>“Happy”</i> <i>“Relaxed”</i> <i>“Open and friendly”</i>
		Ethics	<i>“Lack of care for their own community.”</i> <i>“Drugs are going around.”</i>
	Residents involved in Volunteer organizations	Capability on projects	<i>“Amount of knowledge and passion for projects.”</i> <i>“We don’t have many differences.”</i>

While volunteer tourists found more differences than similarities from general residents, they found more similarities than differences from residents working in the same volunteer organizations. Most of the similarities came from the passion and knowledge related to their volunteer projects, such as passion for natural conservation, animal care, and sustainable lifestyle.

Meanwhile volunteer tourists considered residents who are not working in their volunteer organization and residents working in their volunteer organization different. Study participants considered residents who are not working in their volunteer organization as people who do not contribute to their own community. On the other hand, volunteer tourists perceived staff in their

organizations as their role models who are laborious and have sincere passion and knowledge of Puerto Viejo.

**Table 16:**

***Study Participants' Perceived Similarities from Residents and Staff in Their Organizations***

	Groups of People	Themes	<i>References from the Interview</i>
Similarities	Residents	Human being	<p><i>"We are same human beings."</i></p> <p><i>"We have same basic needs eg; shelter and food"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't have many similarities with them."</i></p>
	Residents involved in volunteer organization	<i>Like-minded</i>	<i>"We are like minded- interest in same things."</i>
		Working for the same goal	<i>"We work for the same goal."</i>
			<i>"We make differences in this area."</i>

**Theme 3; Relationship.**

***Volunteer tourists' relationship with residents.*** Most of the study participants stated that they do not have personal and intimate relationship with local residents. Twelve study participants had superficial relationships with local residents who are not involved in the same volunteer projects. Two study participants had occasional interactions with residents, and the other two noted that they have developed friendships. The number of participants in the table describes the general tendency on the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents.

**Table 17:*****Volunteer Tourists' Relationship with Residents***

	Level of relationship	Number of participants	Themes	References from the Interview, participant observation and diary
Relationship with residents not belonged to study participants' volunteer organization	Superficial	12	Short encounters  Language barriers  Short length of stay  Not shared-accommodation	<i>"I just meet the locals on the street or bar and we chat. but you don't make friends."</i>  <i>"My Spanish is horrible."</i>  <i>"I know I am leaving," "I will go to another place later."</i>  <i>"I am staying here with other people. They are all tourists."</i>
	Personal	2	Shared activity	<i>"I do some activities with residents just like playing Ping-Pong. I found that it broke the ice between myself and a lot of residents."</i>
	Friendship	2	Shared language  Communication Shared living spaces  Shared activities	<i>"I can speak Spanish."</i>  <i>"She is my neighbor. We chat through fence often."</i>  <i>"I met her all the time during work and after work."</i>

***Volunteer tourists' relationship with local staff.*** In general, study participants had superficial relationship with local staff. Three study participants did not have an opportunity to interact with local staff while volunteering in Puerto Viejo, simply because the organization did not have any local staff. Hence, three study participants were excluded from answers to this research question.

**Table 18:*****Study Participants' Relationships with Local Staff***

	Level of relationship	Number of participants	Themes	References from the Interview, diary, and participant observation
Relationship with local staff	Superficial	9	Exclusive interaction between same nationalities	<i>"We are more like one German group. We live together; it makes hard to get in touch with local people."</i>
			Language barriers	<i>"We don't speak each other's language good enough to get intimate and I really can't talk deeper level so it is not intimate at all."</i>
			Not Interested	<i>"I don't think it (a relationship) is important here."</i>
		Short length of stay	<i>"It is not sure that I really connect to them within three weeks."</i>	
	Personal	1	Working together	<i>"I kept going back to the center to teach English to the kids for a month."</i>
	friendship	3	Working together	<i>"We both worked at Yorkin so we could make connection."</i>
			Shared language	<i>"In this case, Spanish really helped me to connect with them... Spanish knowledge is hundreds percent helped me there is no question it help my Spanish it was total emerging."</i>
			Shared living space	<i>"We share meals together; we talk together and do things together."</i>

***Volunteer tourists' relationship with staff from "the First World".*** A few more study participants developed friendships with foreign staff in volunteer organizations compared to the number of those who experienced friendships with residents or local staff in volunteer organizations. This staff was from the same country, continent, or language background.

**Table 19:**

***Study Participants' Relationship with Staff from "the First World"***

	Level of relationship	Number of participants	Themes	References from the Interview
Relationship with staff from the "First World" in volunteer organization	Superficial	7	Not interested  Short length of stay	<i>"I am not interested in a relationship."</i>  <i>"If I stayed here longer, yeah, but it was only three weeks. It is not sure that I can really connect to them within three weeks."</i>
	Personal	5	Long length of stay  Shared language	<i>"As I stay here longer, I get to know them better."</i>  <i>"I interact more with owners because they know more English."</i>
	Friendship	4	Shared-living space  Working together  Hanging out	<i>"We live together, talk, we eat together."</i>  <i>"we are all working together to improve something"</i>  <i>"We have fun together."</i>

***Volunteer tourists' shared activities with residents, and other tourists.*** Volunteer tourists rarely developed close relationships with residents not working at their volunteer organization and residents working at volunteer organizations. Volunteer tourists interacted with

residents mostly in places where traditionally considered as tourist places such as bars, and beaches. Most of the volunteer tourists interacted with residents working in their organization mostly only when they were volunteering.

Volunteer tourists got along with other tourists who volunteered at the same organization or who stayed at the same accommodation while enjoying the beach, jungles, volunteering, and dancing in bars. It resulted in developing friendships with other tourists.

**Table 20:**

***Study Participants' Relationships with People in Puerto Viejo***

	Person	Shared Activities	Themes	References from Diary and Participant Observations
Relationship with other tourists	Karina	Surfing, Cooking, Hanging out, living, Volunteering, taking a trip etc	Friendship	<i>"I also like it more and more because of the nice people I met here (tourists)."</i>
Relationship with residents	Karina	Taking a surfing class, Encounters at bars	Distant Distant	<i>"I think it's not easy to get in contact with them even when you stay three weeks."</i>
	David	Not mentioned		<i>"Today is my day off. I didn't do anything with residents."</i>
Relationship with residents in the organization	Karina	Interactions during volunteering	Distant	<i>"I don't want to be their waitress. I would like it more if they appreciate the volunteer work and say 'thank you.'"</i>
	Kacey	Conversation, working & living together, eating, hanging out	Friendship	<i>"The feeling that I have here is very warm and welcoming. I feel really comfortable. It feels like home with the residents I volunteered with."</i>

## Chapter Five

### DISCUSSION

A number of key themes emerged from the results that illuminate the complex issues surrounding the relationship of volunteer tourists to others in volunteer tourism. In this section, the results from the study together with the theoretical framework are discussed to provide an in-depth understanding of volunteer tourists’ perspectives of emotional solidarity with residents.

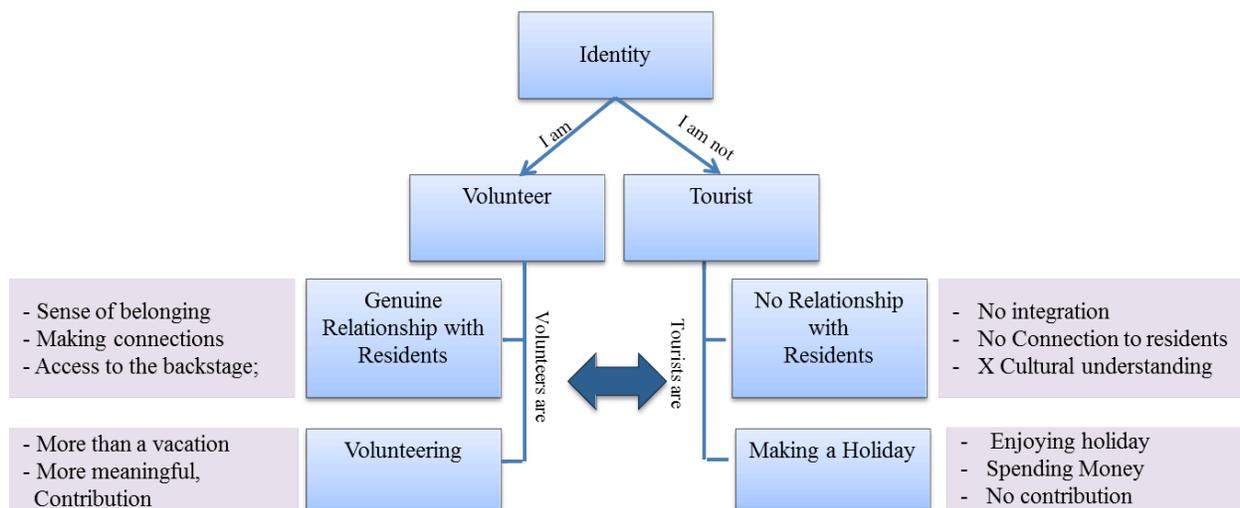
All the names are pseudonyms.

#### Identity

As identified in the previous chapter, volunteers did not identify themselves as tourists, but disassociated themselves from tourists. Volunteer tourists argued that they are part of the community, stating their relationship with local community. Figure 5 displays the differences between volunteers and tourists mentioned by the study participants.

**Figure 5:**

*Volunteer Tourists’ Identity*



**I am not a tourist, nor is this a vacation.** The effort of study participants distinguishes them from tourists and plays an important role in their identity construction. Parts of the reasons

were that study participants' images of tourists as those who do not get along with and/or learn from local residents but just making holidays for themselves. Study participants recognized themselves as volunteers mainly in relation to their participation in volunteer work and their relationship with residents in Puerto Viejo.

Each volunteer tourist was asked, "Do you consider yourself as a volunteer tourist and why did you decide to volunteer during your vacation?". Being considered as a tourist was not a pleasant experience for many study participants. Some study participants were perceivably offended. They posed, frowned on their faces, or immediately said "no", when they heard the word "tourist". Volunteer tourists felt uncomfortable and were sometimes confused by being called tourists rather than volunteers. Despite the fact that I explained the definition of volunteer tourists as "those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing, 2001), they hardly changed their negative attitudes toward the word "volunteer tourist".

The distinction between volunteers and tourists was a very important part of their identity construction. Study participants differentiated themselves from general tourists saying that they are "more than just tourists", and they are doing more than "just making holidays". The volunteer tourists claimed that they are different from tourists because of their status as volunteer and their interaction with local residents. Volunteer tourists regarded "tourism" and "tourists" as something less meaningful and highly oriented toward products and services for pleasure offered by the tourism business and mainly based on economic exchanges.

These findings were first suggested to me while I was conducting my second interview in Puerto Viejo. Calvin, an American male volunteer in his 30's, did not show disagreement to be called a tourist at first. However, he began to compare his experience in Puerto Viejo to a "regular tourist" who according to him, "doesn't experience company with the residents nor gets to know the culture of the town, but enjoys sightseeing and feeding the pockets of people who make a lot of money from alcohol".

Like Calvin, volunteer tourists clearly distinguished "volunteers" and "tourists" based on the relationships with local residents. Study participants argued that they have genuine relationships with local residents, emphasizing that their relationships with residents goes beyond money exchange. Study participants focused on feelings of closeness and sense of belonging with the community in comparison with tourists who they describe as "laying on the beach all the time by themselves". Volunteer tourists claimed their superiority to tourists saying that "Unlike tourists, volunteers experience company with residents", "Different from tourists, volunteers become a part of community", and "volunteers experience culture through their relationship".

Unlikely, volunteer tourists described tourists as whose relationship is based on money, frequently associating tourists with "spending money", followed by "tourists don't get real relationship with local residents", "doing tourists activities (ex; visiting tourist places, sightseeing, and partying), "coming and going", and "tourists don't get culture like volunteers do". Study participants regarded tourists as only crass consumers while the volunteers are having shared activities with residents and contributing to the community. Drew explained,

If I did not volunteer, then I [would] only be a tourist, only [would] go to the shop and they [residents] only see my money. Now that I work here and I work in this Wildlife

Conservation Center, I can tell that [residents] recognize me and say ‘okay okay you are not just [a] tourist’

Tina shared a similar opinion, "If I would be a tourist here I think that everything would be different. It would be more about just money spending. [Residents may say] ‘She is just here to spend your [her] money’ but now I am here to help them so that is different.”

It seemed that volunteer tourists ignore the importance of generated money from tourism business in this town, where tourism is one of the most important economy driving forces. Countless residents work in the tourism business in Puerto Viejo, such as in hostels, restaurants, travel agencies, nature tours, surfing classes, and other leisure activities. Tourists can support the community by spending money on “tourist things” because the residents can directly get benefits from the money from tourists. However, volunteer tourists seemed to not recognize the contribution of the tourism business for economic development of the whole town.

**Table 21:**

***Contrast between Tourism and Volunteer Abroad according to Interviewees***

Constructs	Verbatim referring to Tourism	Verbatim referring to Volunteer Abroad
Relationship	Relationship, based on money exchange Doesn't get real relationship with local residents Come here and go away	Genuine relationship, more than money exchange Experience company with local residents Make friendship Be part of a community
Experience	Visit a lot of places Do tourist things; Drinking, sightseeing Doesn't get culture Experience foreign culture, not Costa Rican culture	Live here (Puerto Viejo) Don't do tourist things Experience culture Learn local culture

Meaning	Make Holidays Doesn't contribute to the community	Contribute
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Some study participants further differentiated between vacationing and volunteering abroad. Eight study participants said their experience is “more than a vacation”. This resulted from their experiences from volunteering. Volunteer tourists said that “I see it [volunteer] more a job in nice environment”, “I came here to volunteer...I do take it as learning experience”, “It is not a vacation. I decided to volunteer for a year”, and “It is not real vacation for me. It is kind of lifestyle change”. Volunteer tourists regarded their experience as more meaningful than taking a holiday because they are learning and making differences in the community, thereby requiring more dedication than making a holiday. Their answers were different from the well-known definition of volunteer tourism from Wearing as, "...[a] tourist who, for various reasons, volunteer[s] in an organized way and undertake[s] holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in [the] society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment”(p.1). In that the volunteer tourists disagreed that they are tourists and they are on their vacation.

Desire to integrate into the community through volunteering was the most frequently mentioned differentiator between vacation and volunteer abroad. Volunteer tourists stated, "It is not really a vacation for me. I don't want only travel. I want to interact with more people here and be a part and leave my mark here", "I want to get to know culture", and "I want to integrate myself into the culture."

**I am a volunteer. I fit in this community.**

*I contribute.* The volunteer tourists interviewed desire to appear positive and supportive of the community. Status as a volunteer was another important factor that study participants used to boost their status compared to general tourists. Respondents rarely directly described

themselves as feeling positive toward the community. Instead, they created a distinction between volunteers as a positive group and tourists as a negative or ignorant group, and then defined themselves as volunteer. Study participants often stated that volunteers come to Puerto Viejo for a better purpose such as making changes in the community or learning from the community, while tourists come to the town only to enjoy their holidays and spend their money.

George expressed the following:

I feel I am a volunteer. Tourist is not a word I like. I like to be a volunteer than a tourist because volunteer[s] contribute but tourists come here and spend their money but they are not really contributing. They don't make...they are not useful. They use their time just for themselves. I think they [volunteers] have the same vision about traveling but they want to feel they also like to contribute and to give something back to the place where they are staying. Yeah, I think it makes more memorable when you go home when you have the feeling that you did something not only [to] enjoy yourself.

George constructed volunteers as contributors and helpers who travel the world and take responsibilities in their travel destinations unlike tourists, who are ignorant. While volunteers and tourists share similarities in terms of participation in tourist activities, George noted that volunteers receive and extend a positive impact in the community because they are committed to making a difference or giving something back to the place in which they stay through being part of the developmental practices.

Helen, a teenager European volunteer tourist, also shared similar perceptions of volunteers and tourists in terms of their contribution to the community. Helen said:

I want to interact more with people here and be a part, and leave my mark here. You know? Do something so when I leave here I think oh I did something. I know I do not only want to travel and visit places like a tourist but I really want to do something for the locals. Afterward, I know I did something good and for me as well I wanna see if I like tourism, you know.

*I feel close to residents.* The feelings of relational closeness with local residents were reported as an important part of the study subjects' experiences in Puerto Viejo. Volunteer tourists commented that their most memorable experiences were interactions with residents, and they received many benefits from their genuine relationships. Study participants' statements supported the findings from previous literatures maintaining that volunteer tourists feel they can have meaningful interpersonal experiences (Coren & Gray, 2011; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Brown and Morrison 2003).

In response to the most memorable moment during their time in Puerto Viejo, many volunteer tourists perceived hospitalities from residents as the best experience. Calvin, a volunteer tourist from the United States described his experience:

I really appreciate Hajinto to show me how to do stuff in a garden. He is very nice. He always asked me if I want to [pick] some fruit from his garden. I met him because when I first got here, Alice had introduced me to [him] who had a spare room and I was renting from him for [the] first month. The gardener was there almost (nice) the gardener at the place I was staying for a while and he showed me all kinds of stuff of Plants. As far as taking my knowledge, I think, I think that learning the stuff from garden from Hasinto was the best.

Tina had similar experience from residents:

Today, our bicycles broke down, and we searched a shop for 2 hours but we couldn't find one. On the way to home, we bought our breakfast at a grocery store. The clerk at the grocery store asked us, "What happen to your bike?" and we said, "It has been broken." He said, "OK, just buy tools and we will fix [it] for you," and he fixed our bicycle for free. I believe this is a good community. The people here are really friendly and nice. Volunteer tourists developed positive feelings toward the town and people. Volunteer tourists understood local residents as friendly and nice people based on their encounters with

them. The study subjects mentioned their close relationships with local residents provided them with good memories and experiences, as well as feelings of welcoming and acceptance.

*I live here.* Study participants said that, unlike tourists who come in and out of the town, they live in the town, thereby contribute to a sense of belonging in Puerto Viejo. The study participants stated that they fit into the community because they feel close to the town, their accommodations are located in the town, and they interact with residents. Tina, a volunteer with a Macaw conservation organization, said she felt Costa Rica became her new home, because of her volunteer work, friendships with other staff (staff from other places than Costa Rica) and volunteer tourists. Tina said:

It means for me home for a short time because I came here and Costa Rica is not the country where I live. I know my home is in Germany but here is now home. I am here 10 days. Here is my home. Here is my house, and my stuff so when I came here ok I feel comfort here, and make friends be safe all the staff um Puerto Viejo for me is now yeah. I am going around and it is like my town.

Study participants noted that because they lived in Puerto Viejo, they did not feel they are tourists. Some study participants further stated that tourists come in and out of Puerto Viejo for their short vacations; hence, it is hard to see that tourists are living in the town. Kacey, a volunteer at Ego Farm, a sustainable organic farm, responded to this question.

I: Could you tell me what is the definition of *tourist* for you?

Kacey: I don't know. I guess [thinking or hesitating to respond] tourism is weird. Tourists are here to experience culture too, of course, but, I feel like they just come and leave this community. It is hard for me to describe, but I am not here to go to restaurants and to go out to bars. That is tourists' things to me. I don't do that. It is more about being in nature, something like that.

Similarly, I noted in my journal during fieldwork:

While I was staying in Puerto Viejo, I noticed that Puerto Viejo got busy with tourists generally when it was sunny. I asked residents who were working in hostels why the number of tourists was different on rainy days and sunny days. The residents said tourists pay attention to the weather cast and move from the Caribbean side to the Pacific side depending on the weather. Tristan, a founder Ego farm, stated that volunteer tourists support the town during rainy seasons, because they rarely move out of the town during their volunteer work even though it is rainy. The differences in the mobility of volunteer tourists and tourists may reinforce the sense of belonging to the town.

However, “living here” does not always mean they feel they are connected to the whole community. In some cases, living “here” meant residing at the volunteer site or volunteer community and not in Puerto Viejo. The sense of belonging of which many participants spoke was often limited to their volunteer organizations. Especially those who rarely interacted with residents highlighted that they felt they lived at the volunteer site and that they belonged in their volunteer organizations rather than in the town. For example, Drew from Germany was staying in a house with other German volunteer tourists who were working in the same organization. She seldom interacted with residents, mainly spending time with other German volunteers involved in the same organization. Despite the fact that her volunteer organization was located right beside a beach crowded with residents and visitors, Drew’s feeling of connection was limited to her volunteer organization. Drew said,

I am not just a tourist. I work with animals, and residents. I live in this center, and get to know people working here especially in this project. I get to know the wildlife in Costa Rica very well. I feel I am part of here, specially here this center. I feel attached to this center, but not to this area. I will miss animals but I will not want to come back to this town.

Similar to Drew, Ruth, a volunteer at SELC, noted that she felt she belonged in SELC rather than the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. Ruth from Mexico noted, “...yeah definitely I do

feel part of staff. I am not a guest. This is like my family in many ways. We talk, and we eat together. I do feel part of here [this farm]”.

*I am part of Puerto Viejo; volunteering makes a connection.* Study participants commented that they felt they were part of the town because residents recognized them. In many cases, respondents stated that volunteering plays an important role to make connections between volunteer tourists and residents. Volunteering created topics that residents and volunteer tourists could converse over and although volunteer tourists rarely continued their relationships with those they encountered, the onetime conversation generated positive feelings. Tina told a story saying:

Volunteer helps me to feel that I am part of here. A guy talked to me “what you are doing here?” and I said “yeah, I am working with Rapas [parrots]”. Well he said, “Oh with Rapas! That is so great! Tell me about your work” and I was chatting with him maybe an hour about my work and parrots, He was really interested. Later he asked me “Oh my! How is Ellen?” Yeah! He knew Ellen, my supervisor at the project!

Kacey also explained that her volunteering connects her with the residents of Puerto Viejo, thereby contributing to a sense of belonging.

I: Do you think you could make the friends because you volunteered or because you stayed here with people you work with?

Kacey: I mean that could be a reason that I could cross pass with someone. They were like “hey what are you doing?” and I was like “I am volunteering” and we start talking for a while and we make nice friends for a day. Sometimes it is long term. Actually I met one of my friends here in the first week. I was on the phone with mom. We talked about the farm and a man came up to me and ‘Oh I know Tris and Alan’ you know like, ‘hey, how are you, what you are doing? and he give [gave] me a point where I should go to eat something like that. So it was really great to have him as a friend because he was able to show me around Puerto Viejo and tell me where to go what I would like. So it was nice, good. People will remember you here.

Sometimes volunteer tourists are known by the residents through the organizations they work for. David explained that he is known to some residents in the town as “a Dutch guy volunteering at Wildlife Conservation Center,” commenting:

I think my volunteer work help me be known by the residents because a lot of people visited here and a lot of people know about this place. Since I have been here for a long time last, some of the people recognize me like ‘hey the guy from Wildlife Conservation Center’. That is very nice and I think some people do know me as the guy working in rescue centre so I do feel being a part of Puerto Viejo.

Volunteer tourists think they are not “tourists” because the residents differentiate them from tourists. They heard or felt that residents consider them as “a guy from Wildlife Conservation Center”, or “a volunteer”, thereby developing their image as something better than “tourist”.

However, the question might be if volunteer tourists are just known to the residents simply because of their volunteering. The small number of people in the town and/or the volunteer tourists’ relatively long length of stay can be other reasons that make them known. One day, I came across a lady from the town at a hostel. She told me that she heard about an Asian researcher trying to interview all international volunteers in the town, and that the researcher must be me. I did, conversely, observe that tourists, who stayed in Puerto Viejo for a relatively long period of time and did not volunteer, in the region often befriended with residents from Puerto Viejo. The residents’ friendly characteristics can be another reason to make connections. I noticed that many residents in the town called to me, “Hola China (hello Chinese)”, and talked with me, inquiring about my daily life. Some of the residents remembered me and talked with me whenever they saw me on the street.

*Access to the backstage.* Volunteer tourists make distinctions between volunteer sites and Puerto Viejo in terms of authenticity. Study participants said Puerto Viejo is not authentic

because there are a lot of tourists and tourism businesses. Study participants generally presumed that Puerto Viejo has not authentic Costa Rican culture, whereas their volunteer sites have authentic Costa Rican culture. They explained that “A lot of tourism [industries] are here and it is not really CR life in general”, “This is a very tourist-centric town. Everything is more beautiful, more exciting, and more fun, but it is not like where real people live, work, and go to school—so in that way it is not so real”, and “I thought that here there was only tourism and sun [but not the real people]”.

Meanwhile, volunteer tourists said they feel their volunteer spaces show authentic Costa Rican culture because the places are away from tourism. Study participants described their volunteer site as “backstage” which “the real lives of Costa Rica[s] are”. George volunteered at English after school program, which was located forty minutes by a bicycle from Puerto Viejo. He explained why he thinks his volunteering site is authentic. “The real lives are there. There are typical houses off the hill and jungle and the people don't see many tourists around their area”, and “ there are regular people who are on the ways to school, and the ways to work and take buses you know like more regular and daily life”.

However it is questionable that Puerto Viejo does not have real lives of people. Puerto Viejo is a place where a number of residents live and work. In addition to immigrants, indigenous people live in the town. There are religious buildings that people attend every Saturday and/or Sunday, and there are schools attended by the children in the town. Residents operate tourism businesses, and residents surf on the beach. Although volunteer tourists stated their volunteer sites show authentic Costa Rican culture, some of the volunteer sites were recently set up for specific developmental projects. For example, an indigenous community center was set up by American immigrants about 10 years ago, and Ego Farm was set up a few

years ago by a married-couple, a European and a Costa Rican from San Jose. A remote indigenous reserve, where a study participant volunteered, runs a tour open to tourists. Hence, this research suggests that the study participants' feeling that they are getting to know the "real" Puerto Viejo, might come from stereotypical categorizations.

Study participants made distinctions between volunteer tourists like themselves and other tourists in terms of cultural understanding. Study participants expressed that they developed cultural understanding because of their relationships with residents. Study participants stated that the residents working in the volunteer organization introduced them the culture and history of the town and took them to places that are rarely exposed to tourists. Calvin, a North American in his 30s and volunteered at Ego Tour, commented that:

I think it[volunteering] helped more or so [to know the local culture] because a lot of people working here [his volunteer organization] are locals and they have grown up here for whole their life. They know the people here [Puerto Viejo] and all the places where locals go. And without them, I would be clueless. I would be another stranger or a tourist.

Karina, a German tourist who volunteered at an Indigenous community, gave me another example.

I am getting into the culture a little with the indigenous people. A local boy and his friend showed me where they live. It was up the hill, very far from Puerto Viejo. One person told me that indigenous people rarely take outsiders to their home unless they trust them. If I came here [as a] tourist then I did not know that there are people living up the hill and indigenous people living here so, yeah, that is special.

Meanwhile, volunteer tourists assumed that tourists did not and could not form a well-informed impression of the Caribbean side of Costa Rica, as those tourists only socialize with other tourists. The study participants were adamant: "I am not a tourist. I am getting into the culture a little bit" and "I am not [a] tourist, because they get a slight impression, not really good

impression of a country”. Respondents described tourists as being trapped in the touristic places and rarely interacted with residents, thus not seeing the “the real life” of Costa Rica.

However, it is questionable whether or not volunteer tourists developed a cultural understanding of Puerto Viejo. When volunteer tourists were asked about Puerto Viejo, most of the interviewees said that Puerto Viejo is a touristy town with plentiful beaches, exotic animals, and plants, where people are happy and relaxed. Their responses included statements such as: “The vegetation and animals are very colorful here”, “Costa Rican people are the happiest people in the world”, and “The beach is right next to the bus station. It gives me cool feeling. It is really laid back here”. Their knowledge of Puerto Viejo was similar to Costa Rica tourism institutes’ international tourism campaigns, which often promote the nature based on the result of the Happy Planet Index.

**Conclusion.** Emotional solidarity can be interpreted as emotional closeness and a sense of solidarity that binds individuals together as part of a group. Woosnam (2009) suggested that three dimensions or factors of emotional solidarity were (a) a welcoming experiencing from residents, (b) sympathetic understanding, and (c) emotional closeness. Volunteer tourists claimed that they have close relationships with residents, unlike tourists. Volunteer tourists identified themselves as volunteers in contrast to other tourists. Strong emphasis was placed on friendships with local residents, a sense of belonging to the community, connections to the residents, and access to the real lives of people. At first glance, volunteer tourists seemed to have emotional solidarity with residents.

However, it is important to note that these claims were based on the comparisons between themselves and tourists. Volunteer tourists’ relationships with residents were limited to staff at their volunteer organizations. Their emotional closeness to Puerto Viejo was mostly the

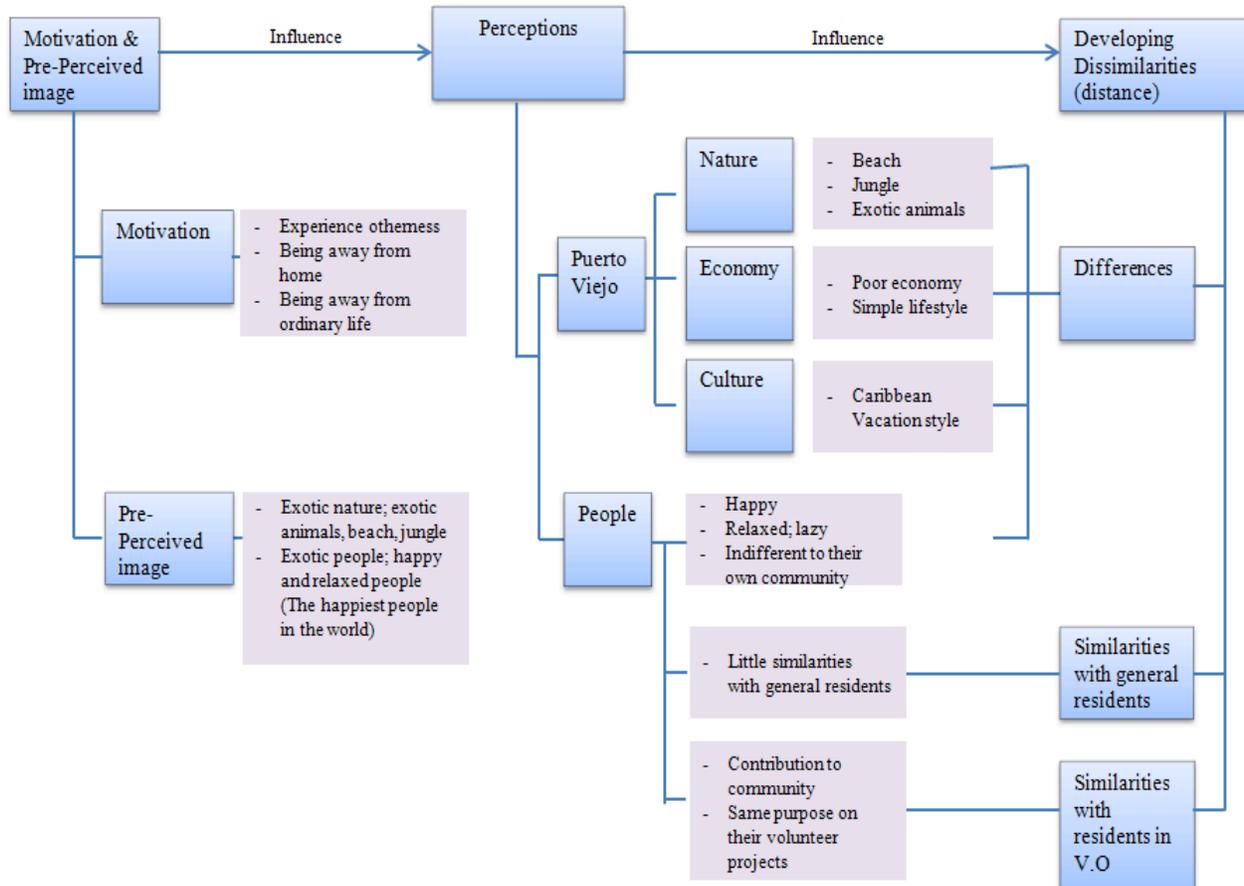
result of their volunteer work and relationships with other people from the same cultural and language areas, rather than their relationships with residents.

Hence, it is questionable if their reference to the sense of closeness means that volunteer tourists have formed emotional solidarity with residents, or if it merely suggests that there are no conflicts between volunteer tourists and residents. Later, during the interviews, study participants explained that they are indifferent to building relationships with residents, and are satisfied with their relationships with other tourists. Moreover, study participants did not show sympathetic understandings. These tensions and ideas will be discussed in the following.

**Perception toward Puerto Viejo (Otherness)**

**Figure 6:**

*Volunteer Tourists' Perceptions toward Puerto Viejo*



According to emotional solidarity theory, as suggested in tourism studies by Woosnam, commonalities between volunteer tourists and residents could potentially contribute to the development of close relationships. Woosnam (2010a) explained that if residents perceive commonalities with tourists, “this reflects the residents’ willingness to realize they are not entirely different from tourists, debunking the standard ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mind-set” (Woosnam, 2009, p. 255). I researched what commonalities volunteer tourists express they have with residents in order to find volunteer tourists’ in-group identity with tourists. Results showed that study participants generally could not mention any similarities they think they have with

residents. Study participants had constructed an “us-volunteers” versus “them-residents” mindset, rather than building in-group identity with residents.

Raymond and Hall (2008) state that “international volunteering may in fact reinforce the existing stereotypes and deepen the dichotomies of ‘them and us’” (p.531). Consistent with the previous study of volunteer tourism, most of the study participants were aware of the differences between the study participants, themselves, and the residents. “Otherness” was one of the key experiences the study participants had while they were volunteering in the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. Volunteer tourists did not mention their sense of unity with the Costa Rican residents, nor showed a desire to identify themselves with them. Rather, volunteer tourists constructed their identities as compared to the residents in Costa Rica. The resident population in the region and the staff of volunteer organizations were important actors in promoting the volunteer tourists’ identity as that of “volunteer” and the identity of “us” various “others”.

First, study participants differentiated their own cultures and the culture they experienced in the Caribbean region of Costa Rica. Study participants constructed the binary as “self versus others” saying, “simple lifestyle in Costa Rica versus materialistic life style in their own country(ies)”, and “happy and easy-going life in Costa Rica versus stressful life in [their] own country”.

Second, study participants also differentiated between the people involved in their volunteer project from other residents of the Caribbean region. These respondents referred to the people involved in volunteer projects as their role models, while portraying local residents as those who are indifferent to their community, and/or potential “problem-causers” for the staff of their volunteer organizations. This research suggests that their perceptions might be related to

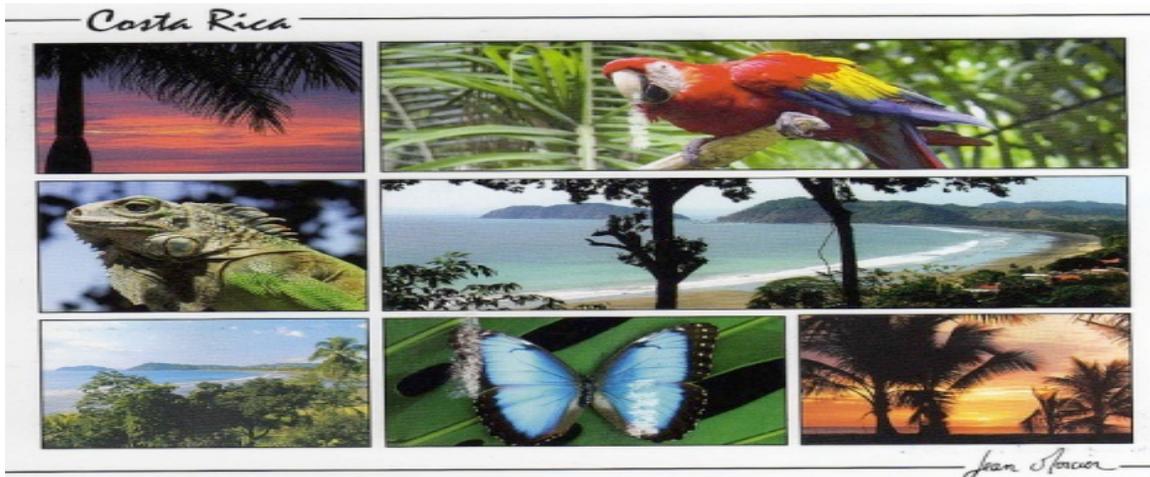
their travel motivation and their pre-perceived image of Costa Rica. The following will explain that.

**Desires for seeking otherness.** The dominant representations of destination countries offered by most of the gap year industry are based on simple dualisms and essential concepts of “other”. Leaving home, packing one’s bags and ideas, and setting out to explore “the other” is a practice embedded, at least in part, in the inspiration behind “the gap year” (Simpson, 2004). Volunteer tourists’ expectations of their travel establish their fascination with the culture and people of their volunteer region, often resulting in the practice of “othering”. Galani-Moutafi (2000) argued that tourists desire a high degree of “otherness” so that their experiences are much more satisfying and memorable. The study participants were in keeping with this argument. The study participants’ expectations and motivations to participate in volunteer tourism continue to be similar to the experience exotic nature, and new people as something different from their “ordinary” lives in their home countries.

Two pictures below, Figure 8, was taken by a study participant. This show how study participants perceived Costa Rica. Surprisingly, the picture is similar to a souvenir post card Figure 7, which was selling at some souvenir shops in Puerto Viejo.

**Figure 7:**

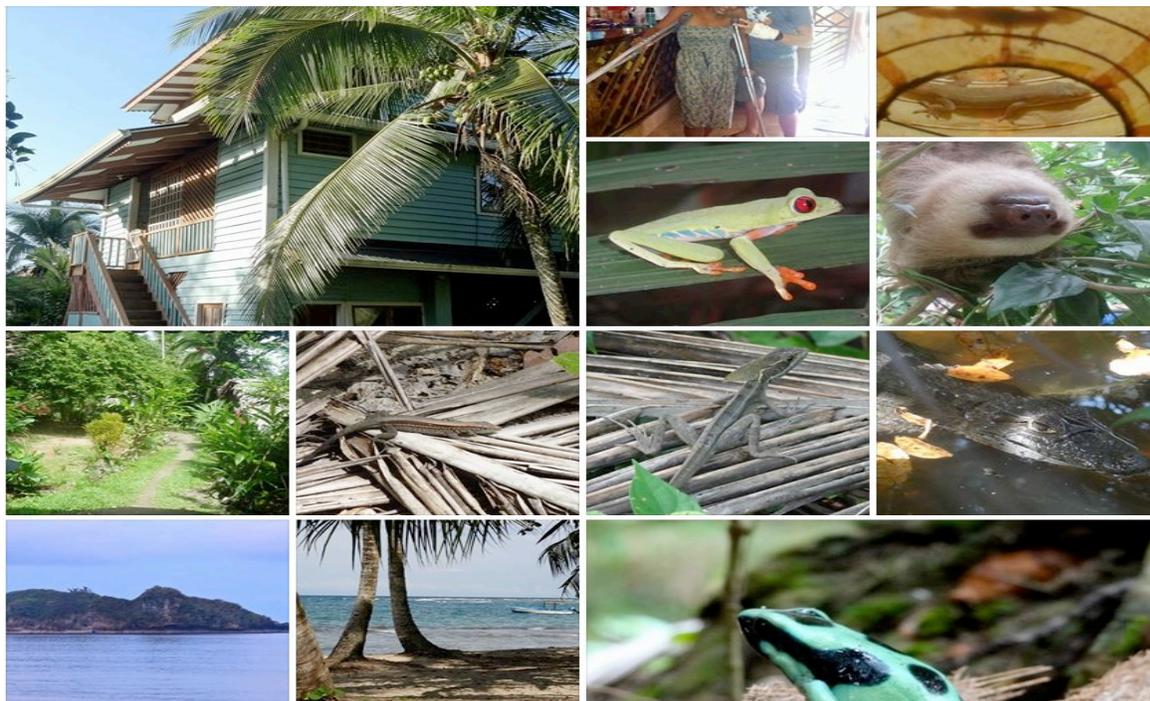
*Images of Costa Rica Shown in a Souvenir Post Card*



[Source: [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)]

**Figure 8:**

*Image of Puerto Viejo Taken by a Study Participant*



[Source: from a participant's photos on Facebook]

The study participants were enticed to come to Costa Rica because they imagined Costa Rica as an exotic and fantastic place, different from their country. Much of Costa Rica's tourism industry is dependent upon its well-known tropical faunas and floras, pure white beaches and interesting animals such as parrots, sloths, and turtles. Costa Rican government tourism uses the slogan "not artificial ingredients" in its advertising to increase its tourism market and reputation. The country has predominant reputation as one of the top eco-tourist destinations.

Volunteer tourists named clear expectations of the countries such as "the tropical jungle", "beach", and "exotic wildlife animals", which are "something different". Tropical heavenly national image of Costa Rica attracted the study participants to come to Costa Rica with the hopes of discovering something new.

Andrew from Holland, who previously visited Puerto Viejo, stated his desire to experience working with exotic animals, "I expected an experience to work with exotic animals." Helen from Germany, who had Spanish ability, said she had a chance to go to Spain but felt it to be too familiar. She explained that she did not go to the country because Spain is in Europe near her own country, and she knows the country well. The tropical exoticism of Costa Rica appealed more to her:

Here in Costa Rica? (yeah) Well actually before I came here, I thought it was even more exotic. I thought that there was a jungle everywhere. It is still more exotic here, but it is more developed than I thought. I thought that here it would be more different. I thought it would be very different. Costa Rica is still exotic and different. I like the beach so much, the atmosphere and the people and culture of Caribbean culture.

Some study participants highlighted their desire to live away from home and leave their stressful and ordinary routines. The study participants found an opportunity in Costa Rica which seems to help them break away from their ordinary life and enjoy their adventure experiencing something different and new. Drew was taking a break from her study before she started her

Master's degree. She said she came to Costa Rica through a German volunteer-sending organization. After her graduation from her university, she traveled to South Africa and India before landing in Costa Rica. She said "I wanted to come to Costa Rica because I wanted to live in another country, living in a country far away and living on the beach and living in Costa Rica". Similar to Helen, she had opportunity to visit Spain but also declined saying, "The country is near to my country. I have been there many times before." Other volunteers, Donavan and Ru also named their desire to live away from home: "I am not very interested in sitting down in a class room: boring places, boring people, learning life with books. I was also sick of being in Mexico. I wanted to travel at this age". Donvan, a professional accountant in the States, was looking for the opportunity to change herself. She told me the reason to come to Costa Rica as "one of the reasons was to get out of normal everyday life I was so accustomed to, you know, working and going home and [the] other reason was to, kind of, de-stress from my stressful job, yeah".

**Developing sense of otherness.** When I asked the study participants whether or not their volunteering changed their perceptions toward Puerto Viejo, the answer was "no". Study participants had similar ideas about Puerto Viejo such as "beach, jungle, and exotic animals", even after their volunteering. Difference was one of the most frequently spoken words from the study participants when they described the residents or the culture of Puerto Viejo. Although three study participants mentioned similarities between themselves and people in the Caribbean side of Costa Rica, the similarities were mostly about existence of poor people, and basic human needs.

Thirteen out of sixteen study participants did not mention commonalities shared between themselves and the local residents until I inquired about it, and even then had difficulties

responding. The common answers to the question were "Commonalities, OK. Well (thinking), that is difficult. That is hard", "I think (thinking) in general, we don't have that much in common. You don't think that we have many things in common. Here it is a very different country", "What do we have in common? I don't know (laughing)", and "We looked the same. We have two arms and two legs (thinking)... (I: Other than that?) No". When I asked them about cultural understanding and the impression of the region, fifteen study participants simply mentioned how different the culture and landscapes are compared to their own.

It seemed that study participants had difficulties to find the commonalities since cultural and economic differences took precedence. Study participants paid attention to the apparent differences such as the language and exterior of the town, which the study participants referred to as "culture". A study participant stated that "I don't know we are all human beings but it is really different culture for me. I live in Germany. It is totally different than this town starting from the housing building how things are managed. I think it is very difficult to find commonalities".

Even those who built relationships with residents working in their volunteer organizations and with local residents had a difficult time noting similarities. For example, George stayed in the town for 3 months while intensively volunteering in two different organizations from Monday to Saturday. He built close relationships with children in Al Hue, which was his volunteer organization, and some residents in the town. I observed that often one to three residents greeted him, chatted with him, and often made appointments with him for ping-pong games when he walked around the town. In spite of these intensive interactions with residents, it was hard for him as well to come up with the similarities.

George: Am...(thinking) it is very difficult. It is a really different lifestyle than I am used to. Everything is difficult in Belgium. It is a really different lifestyle than I am used to (repeat). In Belgium, I don't go surfing, and I don't walk in my slippers (laughing). I

think surfing is an interesting hobby, but I don't go surfing. It is a different lifestyle.

People here, they are living in a different situation. I don't know [if we have similarities]. It would seem that the study participants pay more attention to the differences in order to satisfy their travel experiences. Previous studies stated that volunteer tourists travel to encounter the other in search for untouched pristine and authentic experience to collect in the sense of otherness (Smith, 1989; Simpson, 2005). The study participants' motivation on volunteer tourism was based on searching for this "otherness". Vasiliki (2000) stated that "tourists embark on their journeys with already formed images...they expect to be entertained and exposed to performances which are different from those of their familiar world" (p.211).

I had asked Sid to tell me if his volunteering influenced his impression on Puerto Viejo. He expressed that he enjoyed his days in Puerto Viejo with "beach, jungle and animals", a stereotypical national image of Costa Rica (Trip advisor, lonely planet, 2013). Study participants told me they developed their ideas about the region as, "Paradise with jungle, beach and laid back happy people", which they expected to see before they arrive in the country. The stereotypical image of Costa Rica was believed as authentic and genuine reality that represents the region. In keeping with the discovery of Crossley (2012), Puerto Viejo becomes "seductive because its otherness is cast in fantasy as exotic, providing exciting, colorful and disorderly" (p. 247). Puerto Viejo became a place of the mundane, albeit authentic, presenting a vision of society that is untouched by "the modern time".

Another factor that hinders them to find similarity was the stereotypes of developed countries and under-developed countries. Although study participants rarely directly spoke of the world "developed" and "developing country", the image of Puerto Viejo and their own country was aligned with the images of third world and the first world. Study participants compared to their perceptions of Costa Rica to those of their own country saying their country has "developed

technology”, “good houses”, “going around with cars”, “hard working people exclusively pursuing their careers”, “developed country”, and “consumerism”. Meanwhile, study participants described Puerto Viejo saying “not civilized town”, “poor but happy people”, “laid back people”, “poor village”, and “going around with bicycles [because they don’t have cars]”. When study participants were asked how they got the ideas, many study participants said they learned it through books, watching people at beach, and talking with other tourists. The limited critical engagement within volunteer tourism projects means that students are able to confirm, rather than challenge, which they already knew (Raymond & Hall, 2008). The following describes the study participants’ different perspectives toward their own culture and the culture in Puerto Viejo.

***Non-possession (Puerto Viejo) vs Consumption (Home Country).***

[field note] I volunteered at an Indigenous community center this morning with a Canadian, and Europeans. The volunteer tourists made Christmas ornaments with children in the center, and served soup and cookies for the guests’ breakfast. After volunteering, the Canadian volunteer said, “they [the guests] are so wonderful. They make everything from nothing. They have nothing but turn it to everything”. He continued to talk how much Canadians have and is fortunate.

This example explains how volunteer tourists view residents in Puerto Viejo. As with the Canadian volunteer tourists in this example, a number of volunteer tourists generalized residents of Puerto Viejo as having no or little property. Meanwhile, people in Canada, in their home country, have a lot of property. Despite the fact that there are people experiencing poverty and homelessness in Canada and the so-called “first world”, study participants made a clear distinction between Puerto Viejo and their home country regarding issues of poverty.

Ten study participants, out of sixteen, stated that the simple lifestyle in Puerto Viejo was the most obvious difference between their own country and the region. Study participants

described the regional lifestyle as “a simple life”, “untouched by modern times”, and with “less facilities, and infrastructure”. Their idea of a simple life is somewhat different from poverty which previous studies have discussed (Simpson, 2004; Crossley, 2012). Study participants were aware of the respected social welfare system and economic status in Central America. Study participants had positive and respectful attitudes toward the economic situation in the region. Some study participants stated, "It was surprisingly pleasant not to find poverty in the area."

However, economic status in the region is still operated as a definer of difference that distinguishes their own country as First world and Costa Rica as Third world (or second world, according to some study participants). Study participants stated "Here is old and not stable, but in Germany everything is in order and [there are] good houses ", "Germans have more technologies", and "They don't have all the facilities we have in Belgium". Kitty, a volunteer at SELC, which is a permacultural sustainable farm that located in the middle of jungle, described her impression on the Caribbean region:

Kitty: With my American lifestyle, obviously they live a simpler life, a much simpler life. I mean that there is no one consuming and trying to have better products than their neighbors. We don't need more products. Here, there is a lack of need and want, so I think that is the biggest difference.

Donavan, who is in her late 20s and is a professional accountant from the States, shared a similar opinion saying

Donavan: I think the difference is that their life is more [economically] simple and they are [non-economically] more rich. I have a lot more things, but I don't always appreciate it. But they [residents] really appreciate and enjoy every aspects of their life. I think that is not common in USA cause we always try to get more, and buy more. I want to change and that is another reason why I wanted to visit them.

As shown through the quote, study participants are emphasizing differences and try to establish a dichotomy of “them and us” based on economic situation. Participants described Puerto Viejo as

being “away from consumerism”, “untouched by modern times”, “poor”, and “having no desire to have better products”. On the other hand, they described their own country in terms of wealth: “we try to buy more, get more” and “we have too much to be happy”. Despite the respectful attitude, study participants separated the two countries as “the haves (self, their own country), and the have-not (others, Costa Rica)”.

Considering the fact that eleven study participants stated that they have superficial relationships with residents, their perceptions of a simple life as an economical attitude with no desire to have more can be a myth. When I asked, "How did you learn the difference between you and the residents?", study participants replied with these responses: "just see and watch when I go out", "by observation" and even "I don't know". A study participant stated that, “Germany has more technology. For example here they do everything [by] riding a bike, but we going drive [drive] a car and everything... I like the people here they just love riding a bike. They like going to the sea and yeah right”.

However, the idea that “everyone riding bikes” is factually dubious, as some people in Caribbean region do in fact have their own cars. In fact, I sometimes rode in cars with residents to attend a church, or to visit my research sites. As well, some local residents explained that technology industry is one of the top businesses in Costa Rica, and the province of Limon, where Puerto Viejo is.

A study participant, who was taking a one year gap tour while volunteering at a Macaw conservation project, described the difference between her country and the region as noted by the lamps on the street, and darkness in the night created the image of an “un-civilized town”.

They [residents] wake up normally at 5 in the morning and go to bed between 8 and 9 pm. In Germany, I stayed up until maybe 9 in the morning and went to bed at half-past 11 or 12 or some time like that. That is really different. Ten pm on the street? There is

nobody. There is nobody! There are no street lamps, but that is ok (highlighting) because there is nobody. Germany is just crowded 24 hours with cars and people. So that was really different. There are no street lamps here, and the electricity is bad. Sometimes the electricity is out. You have to light up candles, and it is not that civilized, like in Germany.

Crossley (2012) suggests that such distancing or “othering” perspectives may not only keep volunteer tourists away from recognizing structural, politicized problems of poverty but also creating an obstruction to the development of empathy with local people.

**Figure 9:**

***Street of Puerto Viejo***



[Source: researcher]

***Poor but Happy Costa Rican verses Rich but Stressed European or American.***

Volunteer tourism studies have researched a number of cases in many different countries.

Although the regions of studies are different, most of the studies commonly demonstrated that volunteer tourists understood their travel destination as “poor but happy” (see Simpson, 2004;

Crossley, 2012). Volunteer tourists tended to romanticize poverty by portraying materially

deprived societies as happy with their ways of life and rewarded with their emotional or spiritual satisfactions (Simpson, 2005). This tendency was also found among the study participants.

The second most repeated image of Costa Rica was a “happy and relaxed country”. Ten study participants said the difference between their country and Costa Rica is the happiness and relaxation that people experience. Respondents said, “People here are so laid back. People work, some people don’t work. They are just happy”, “people here want to enjoy every day”, “they are happy in their way”, and “everybody has a lot of leisure.”

Interestingly, the respondents portrayed the image of their country as being stress-filled, while they emphasized their happy and relaxed lifestyle in Costa Rica. Study participants referred to their country: “everyone is so stressed in the States”, “It is really stressful in Germany. People don’t have time and it is all about money and career”. While life in their countries was related to stress and career, life in Puerto Viejo was associated with vacation activities such as going to the sea, and having frequent time for leisure. While conducting my field study, I often heard tourists and study participants referring to Costa Rica as “the happiest country in the world”.

This was an important national image not only for the study participants, but also for a few immigrants who were volunteering with the volunteer organizations. One day Troy was working in Al Puente with other volunteers. While he was volunteering, he had conversations with the founders and other volunteers. He commented that his life in the United States was all “messed-up”, and he was struggling with depression. One day he read a newspaper that introduced Costa Rica as the happiest country in the world and wanted to know the secret of such joy, so he immigrated to Costa Rica, especially to the small town Puerto Viejo, where he could see the joy of life most strongly.

Interestingly, the Happy Planet Index (HPI) does not only measure experienced well-being that tells the life satisfaction that Costa Rican people feel. The Index includes the data on life expectancy, and Ecological Footprint to calculate 'happy life' of countries (HPI, 2013). Costa Rica's experienced well-being ranked 12<sup>th</sup> followed by Canada (5<sup>th</sup>), and the United State (11<sup>th</sup>) in the same year that Costa Rica was chosen as the happiest country in the world (John, Richard, & Jeffrey, 2012). That could mean that, indeed, happiness in the countries where the volunteer tourists came from could be higher than happiness of Costa Rica. Therefore, this research suggests that the sole and simple-minded idea of "poor but happy" or "happy Costa Rica versus stressful my country" can be a myth which a result from their experiences as a traveler. In fact, study participants stated that they interacted with residents mainly at the bar, dancing floor, restaurants, beaches, and on the street while enjoying leisure activities such as drinking, dancing, and surfing.

As well, study participants had optimistic and "dreamy" perspectives toward the town of white beaches, palm trees, and exotic animals, describing it as "paradise", "Caribbean vacation lifestyle", "lovely place" and "wonderland". Study participants often talked how easy-going the life-rhythm is in Puerto Viejo. One day my European female study participant and I talked about our experience while walking on the beach. She said:

Here, everything goes so easy. People are so relaxed. Everything is so complicated in my country. It was hard to get a job there, and I had problems with my ex-boyfriends. Here, it is easy to hang around, and it is so simple to make a boyfriend. If you like one, you date the one. It's easy.

Meanwhile, the members of a church community who had resided in the town for 15-20 years had different opinions. When I asked about his/her life satisfaction, he/she replied: "Well, that is

what tourists think. I loved the life here a decade ago. After we began to host tourists, the price increased a lot. Eventually, the quality of life dropped here”.

Study participants developed ideas about the work ethics of Costa Ricans related to the happiness in the country. George explained that:

I think people in Belgium are busier with achieving goals. We try to achieve and achieve so many things. They are so stressed. But here we don't see many stressed people. I think they [residents] can go to the beach, and they live more day by day. However, we [people living in Belgium] always feel as though we've failed. They [residents] are not busy with that. They want to enjoy every day, day by day.

Kacey had similar ideas, "It was really good, so it seems everybody has a lot of leisure time; whereas back in the States, I have [had] half an hour or one hour. It is never a whole afternoon to do nothing- in the States”.

***Volunteers care Puerto Viejo, whereas residents are indifferent.*** Raymond and Hall (2007) states working with local residents in the same project can influence volunteer tourists to have equal perspectives toward local residents. However, this is not sufficient to establish equality between the volunteer tourists and local residents in the case of this study. Many volunteer tourists found many residents to be indifferent in their own community, unlike the volunteer tourists themselves and the local residents involved with volunteer organizations who take responsibility for their own community. Despite the fact that volunteer tourists worked with residents to accomplish the goals of their volunteer project, this does not influence the volunteer tourists' perceptions toward local residents in Puerto Viejo. Even though volunteer tourists recognize the responsibility of local residents, in regard to the improvement of their own community; the responsible local residents were simply “exceptions to the rule”. Some volunteer tourists stated their perceptions toward local residents as:

David: Those [local residents in the volunteer organization] are the special one[s] because most of the local people are mostly interested in just making enough money to live. They don't care. It does not make any difference for them as long as they can make enough money to live. They are happy if they can make enough money to live. They are pretty self-centered actually.

Helen: Wednesday we clean the beach and the whole area. But you can see there is again lots of trash on the street. I think that is the difference between people here and the staff. People here don't care much about Puerto Viejo but people here [the volunteer organization] really care.

Even those who built relationship with some local residents who were not involved in their volunteer organization had similar opinions. By claiming that the local residents working in the volunteer organizations are “not normal local residents”, previously mentioned held ideas and stereotypes associated with the “normal” local residents in Puerto Viejo were maintained.

However, it was questionable if the residents really do not care about their own communities. I encountered some local residents who were picking up garbage on the beach. Other local residents at the church I attended told me they pick up garbage, and sometimes take a tour with children. One day I went to Limon with a founder of The Bridge, a volunteer organization, to buy Christmas gifts for children in the center. The sales people in the shop gave us a discount worth sixty dollars, when we told them the purpose of the gifts.

I suggest in this article that the study participants' perceptions of race may shape the volunteer tourists' mindsets of “self-versus others” and their perceptions of the locals as “poor, happy, and indifferent people”. Puerto Viejo is a popular destination for European and North American tourists who travel in search of exotic Afro-Caribbean culture and a Caribbean aesthetic, and it may be seen by tourists as an exotic, laid-back paradise where they can enjoy marijuana and sex with dark-skinned local men (Frohlick, 2007; Lonely Planet, 2014). Intimate relationships between white foreign women and dark-skinned local men are prevalent in Puerto

Viejo and involve monetary exchanges. Tourists from the North or the West often celebrate its exotic Afro-Caribbean and indigenous culture referring to sensual, dark-skinned locals, crack cocaine, reggae, and vibes in Costa Rica, where there is an intensive influence from white European and North American culture (Trip Advisors, 2014; Lonely Planet, 2014).

Puerto Viejo is home to the minority populations of the Afro-Caribbean, who are mostly Jamaican descendants, Nicaraguan immigrants, and indigenous people. At the end of the 19th century, Afro-Caribbean who were mostly from Jamaica came to Limon to contribute to railway construction, and then they settled in Limon and worked on banana plantations. Before the 1980s, there was no road that connected to Puerto Viejo. This difficult accessibility made Puerto Viejo distant from other regions in Costa Rica and caused the Caribbean region to create its own “cultural enclaves that were very different from the dominant white Latino culture in the highlands of Costa Rica” (Frohlick, 2007, p. 9). The cultural enclave on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica is racially organized in the country. Ticos continue to marginalize the area in “racist discourses that construct this area as un unsafe, unclean, and undesirable destination” (Frohlick, 2007, p. 9), while Western travel agencies present this area to potential tourists who are looking for a spirit of freedom and a laid-back paradise (Frohlick, 2007; Lonely Planet, 2014).

In this context of race in Puerto Viejo, volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organizations produced, learned, and constructed an image of locals who are poor but happy and indifferent toward their own community; therefore “who are different from themselves (volunteers and staff from the First World),” and “who have no or little similarities with them” (personal interviews). Through the discourse, volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organizations have marginalized the locals in Puerto Viejo. The section below explains similarities between volunteer tourists and staff working in their volunteer organizations. It

serves as an example that shows how volunteer tourists experience interracial relationships, considering the fact that many staff members at the organizations were white.

**Few similarities between volunteer tourists and residents.** Twelve to sixteen study participants could find and develop similarities and in-group identities only with the residents who were involved in the same volunteer organization. Study participants found the commonalities mostly related to the values and purposes of their volunteer projects stating, “We all want to develop this town, Puerto Viejo –a travel agency”, and “we are interested in Parrot –a Macaw conservation organization”. While study participants differentiated themselves from the general public, they associated themselves with the residents who were involved with the same volunteer projects, such as the founders and staff.

Having similar interests and goals gave volunteer tourists and the staff “topics for talks”. This created a way for meaningful relationship and shared experience between the volunteer tourists and residents. Russia was volunteering in SELC, Sustainable Education and Living Center, a permaculture farm operated by a married couple from the U.S. She came from Mexico to learn about Permaculture in the center, and volunteered there for approximately five months. She explained “we have a lot of differences in culture, but we share a lot of values and behaviors. I guess living like this, your behavior has to mold in everyplace because of behavior rules... we are not so different”.

Volunteer tourists also regarded the staff and founders of their organizations as their role models. For example, Kacey was majored in community nutrition at university, and decided to broaden her knowledge through volunteer experience. She had a strong desire to learn the lifestyle of the farm owners from France and San Jose.

Kacey: You know. They live off the land. They live with what they have. I want to try to be like them. I can live just with what I have. I don't need obviously things to be happy.

Tristan and his wife [the owners of the farm] want to share his wealth. I can do that too. I can share what I have with everyone to be happy and to make a harmony. I am glad that I got the experience.

She regarded the owners as role models of sustainability and community-oriented practices, sharing the same vision and values of farming. She and the owners shared the same vision and values. This gave her the desire to be similar to the owners. The owners are working in the area in which she is interested, getting a good reputation within the region, and teaching her with their knowledge in sustainability, which she wants to learn.

Despite the fact that these volunteer tourists found similarities with the staff and founders of their volunteer organizations, this did not help them find commonalities with other residents. Even though study participants recognized that some of the residents contribute to their own community through their projects, several interviewees implied that the positive contributions of local residents were little in general. For example, interviewees often stated that “the residents in volunteer organizations are not ‘normal residents’, because ‘normal residents’ do not care [about] this community”. David from Wildlife Conservation Center had the idea:

It is not really common so you will learn a lot about the fact that a lot of local people do not respect wild life in this area. They are [the local staff] really special people. Very special people from this region come to help things like helping in Wildlife Conservation Center’s people.

Likewise, by claiming that “the residents in volunteer organization” are “not normal residents”, previously held ideas and stereotypes associated with “normal” Costa Ricans were maintained.

**Conclusion.** Viewing emotional solidarity theory as it relates to tourism studies by Woosnam (YEAR), commonalities between volunteer tourists and residents, such as shared belief, and shared behavior could contribute to the development of emotional solidarity. However, this study found little to support Woosnam’s arguments. Volunteer tourists did not

identify themselves with residents other than those working in the same volunteer organization. Volunteer tourists constantly made distinctions between themselves and residents, despite of the fact that they participated in similar activities with residents, and interacted with residents during their visit to Puerto Viejo. Although study participants recognized that they have shared goals with residents working in the same organizations, this did not influence volunteer tourists to have sense of unity with rest of the residents. Volunteer tourists perceived the positive contributions of local residents were little in general. (I changed the structure of this paragraph a bit based on Michael's comment).

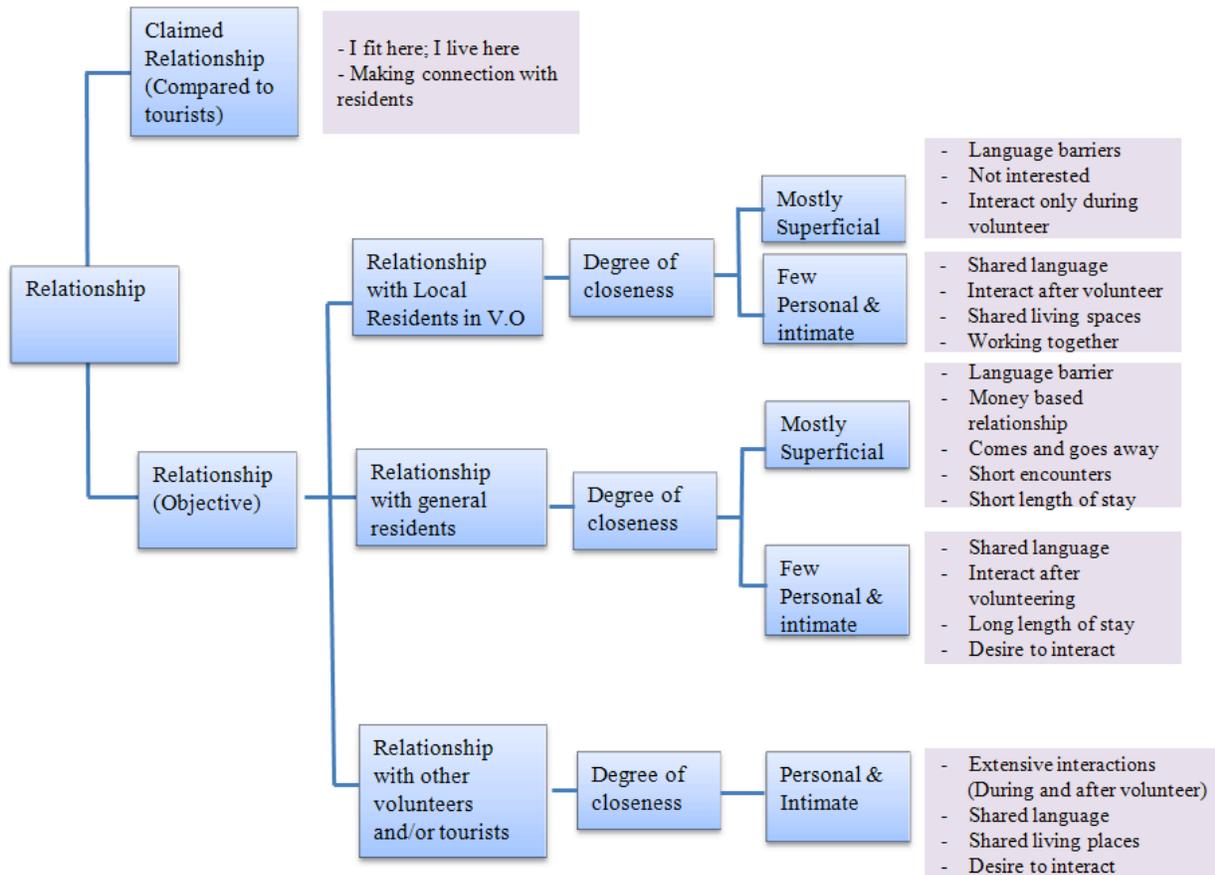
Difference was the dominant theme in describing Puerto Viejo and the residents. One of the important reasons was that volunteer tourists sought exotic experiences—the beach, exotic animals, jungles, and new people—as something different from their “ordinary” life. Another reason was that cultural and economic differences took precedence. Study participants had stereotypes of developed countries and underdeveloped countries and saw Puerto Viejo in terms of their assumptions.

This supports arguments of Simpson (2004) and Raymond and Hall (2008) that lack of critical engagement within volunteer tourism means that volunteer tourists are able to confirm, rather than challenge, their pre-held beliefs. Moreover, this suggests that interactions do not always foster empathy between groups of people.

**Relationship**

**Figure 10:**

*Relationship between Volunteer Tourists and People in Puerto Viejo*



Residents in the host communities are not a homogeneous group of people, nor merely service recipients of a volunteer project. They can be staff with volunteer projects and stake holders of tourism. Residents in volunteer tourism host communities that can be grouped differently depending on their nationality, and emigration status; therefore, rendering it difficult to establish who is “local”. Although the staff of volunteer organizations came from abroad, they can be considered as “local” because many of them have lived in the region over many years. However, for this study, “local residents” will be used as a broad category of racial and ethnic

difference to refer to a diverse group of people residing in the area whose backgrounds include some Caribbean heritage (Jamaican, Cuban) often mixed with Latino ancestry and/or those who claim Caribbean as their identity (Flohlick, 2011).

**Contrast between statements and realities.** The first part of this discussion explained the perceived difference between volunteers and tourists because of their interactions with local residents. Study participants claimed that they have genuine relationships with local residents, a desire to integrate into the community, and a sense of belonging in Puerto Viejo. Similar to the study participants' arguments, previous work in this field has demonstrated that volunteer tourists make genuine friendships in the process of interaction which can foster global peace and tolerance (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Brown & Lehto, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Conran, 2011).

However, as opposed to what the study participants claimed their relationship with residents in comparison to tourists, many study participants stated that they do not have personal and intimate relationships with local residents, when I asked them "how do you want to build relationships with local residents?". The response was; however, contradictory considering the emphasis study participants placed on their good relationships with the local people, especially in comparison to that of tourists. For example, one study participant explained "when you come here for [a few] days as tourists you just stay in your hostel and know the people [tourists] you stay with. My volunteering helps to know the culture and people of course". Conversely, she later described her relationship with local residents as:

I don't have real relationships with residents. I am staying here [hostel] with other people. They are all tourists from different countries. When I go out for dancing, I speak with locals because they [other international tourists] already know a lot of locals. But it is

such a distant relationship. I have not got to know any real locals. Although I meet someone, it is only for chatting.

Another respondent previously explained that her desire to live in Costa Rica led her participate in the volunteer project, saying "when I am doing volunteer and I live here I do more intensively I have intense experience...I work with habitants here with people living here and get to know them more". However, she said that she does not have any relationships with local residents when I asked her about any relationships with residents in the town:

We [volunteer tourists who work in the same organization with her] use laundry service and the shops. There are some residents. I get small interactions there but it is not really intimate. It is not relationship. It is nothing. When I am gone, I think they will not notice that I have left.

She further explained that she is not interested in building relationships with people from the town "I enjoyed building relationship with my host family when I was in San Jose, but here [Puerto Viejo], building relationship is not so important. It is fine. I do not want to build relationship with residents. My relationship with them is not personal".

### **Relationships between volunteer tourists and residents.**

*Relationship within volunteer organization.* Studies argued that the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents is important in that the relationship can bring intercultural understanding and intercultural tolerance, which can foster global peace (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Brown & Lehto, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Conran, 2011). Volunteer organizations play important roles in facilitating interactions, exchanges, friendship and cross-cultural understanding between volunteer tourists and the residents. Considering that interaction with "the other" will not automatically result in a broadening of horizons and greater understanding of the host communities, volunteer organizations in Puerto Viejo played important role in building cross-cultural understanding and friendship.

Volunteer organizations in Puerto Viejo worked as a meeting place where cross-cultural friendships can happen between volunteer tourists and local residents. The volunteer tourists knew the local residents, staff, and volunteers by name. Some of the volunteer tourists extended their relationship beyond the volunteer organization through their relationship with residents in their volunteer organization. Volunteer tourists stated that "I only know the people working here among the residents in this town. I only interacted with few other residents, but I met them through the staff ", "I know some staff cause they work here with me", "I met residents here [volunteer organization] or through here [volunteer organization]". Most of the interactions between local residents in the organization and volunteer tourists naturally occurred, to some extent, through volunteers' work.

Although thirteen, out of sixteen, volunteer tourists had chances to interact with local residents within the volunteer organization, the relationships between the volunteer tourists and residents varied considerably from "having no personal nor intimate relationship" to "feels like a family," depending on the individuals and volunteer tourism program.

It was interesting to see that different people who participated in the same volunteer tourism organizations showed similar patterns of experiences in relationships with local residents. For example, all three volunteer tourists who were volunteering at the Wildlife Conservation Center showed negative attitudes toward the culture and people on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. They volunteered at the organization by cleaning the center, feeding the animals, and guiding visitors. There was little time to interact with locals during their volunteering. All managerial position employees and founders were from European countries near study participants' countries. The study participants often stated that they did not interact with the locals because the locals did not visit the center. The study participants showed little

interest in learning the culture of the region and interacting with the locals, while they portrayed the locals as the culprits who harm the wildlife.

Nile, Sid, and Tina, were volunteering at another wildlife conservation center that specialized in parrot conservation. They said they had a little interaction with locals when they needed help finding almonds, which they needed to collect to feed their parrots. Unlike the volunteers at the Wildlife Conservation Center, the three volunteers showed a desire to get to know the locals in Costa Rica. However, they were frustrated with having no local friends due to their frequent traveling in Costa Rica for their conservation projects.

George and Karina were dissatisfied with their volunteer experience at the Indigenous Community Center due to lack of interactions between themselves and the local residents who were using the services. The two of them were volunteering at the center during breakfast by serving soup and snacks to the indigenous people. The two complained that the indigenous people were not interested in talking with them and that it was hard to get involved in communication with the locals. Interestingly, the two decided to drop out of their volunteering at the organization and spend more time volunteering at an English afterschool program. Although Karina stated that her relationships with the local children at the English afterschool program were superficial, she was satisfied with her interactions with the children while teaching English.

Helen and Donovan, who volunteered in the area of community development, stated that they built friendships with local residents. Helen and Donovan not only worked for, but also worked with locals for community development. Helen's organization had locals in managerial positions, and Donovan's organization was operated by indigenous people. The two study participants stated they learned community through their local supervisors, and they were satisfied with feelings of connection to the locals. These examples suggest that volunteer tourism

organizations can influence building friendships between tourists and locals. However, it is important to note that study participants had difficulties building friendships with local residents, and only a few could overcome the difficulties.

Despite the fact that academics and the industry itself argue that volunteer tourism can bring about mutual friendship between volunteer tourists and local residents, only four out of sixteen study participants mentioned that they have “close relationship” with the local residents working in their organization. Therefore, the research study shows that volunteer tourism does not always result in any meaningful relationships.

Four of the other volunteer tourists stated that they did build close relationships with the local residents while volunteering. Beyond working together with residents, these four study participants had commonalities such as shared language; extended time spent with the residents through social occasions; and/or shared living spaces. All of these factors facilitated the interactions between volunteer tourists and residents, leading to personal and friendly relationships between the volunteer tourists and residents.

Living with residents, while participating as a volunteer, can enhance the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents. As they share the same living space with the staff at volunteer organizations, both staff and volunteer tourists had more opportunities to interact, not only during volunteering, but also after. For example, Kacey spent plenty of time with Tristan and Alejandra, a married couple operating Ego Farm, while volunteering and living on their farm. The extensive interactions with the family developed friendship between them, with Kacey noting “they treat me almost like family. We are family. We share meals together, we talk together, we do things together. It is not like other places”. She highlighted in her journal how

the intensive interactions led her to better her relationships with the family and with others in the town:

[Journal]It feels like home with the residents I volunteered with. I did number of activities from playing with Nadja for cooking, cleaning, planting, harvesting, putting a telephone like up the hill – many different things to out and maintain the land. Through this, we always shared stories, experiences, exchanging our thoughts and learning from each other.

The four volunteer tourists appeared to develop respect, trust, acceptance, caring and friendship through their relationship with the residents involved in their volunteer organization. George explained how his relationship with the children who he taught English to had changed over time, eventually bringing about mutual trust and respect:

At the beginning, the children at the English after school were shy. They didn't respect me, and didn't pay attention to my questions. But it changed when the children saw that I was coming back and they knew that I would be coming back to the education center. It was good when I had the feeling that they had accepted me. When you go there several times, they know you and they start to talk with you and they open up to you and it is really nice. You feel really welcomed and worm like a family. We [children and the interviewee] have built up respect and trust.

However, it is questionable if volunteer tourism itself brings intercultural relationships between the host community and volunteer tourists. A lot of study participants stated that their relationship with local residents in the organization were not personal, nor close. They responded, "it is not personal. We don't live with residents. It is not close relationship. It is about working", "there is not intimacy and personal relationship. I have been interacting with residents from 30 seconds to several hours, but it is very superficial", "it was just superficial. I talked to them but only 'how are you?' I don't know", "it is not deep and friendly relationship just because a lot of volunteers come and go so you can't really build relationships with the staff".

Despite the fact that most of volunteer tourists worked with local residents during their volunteering, the intensive interactions during volunteering did not always lead to personal relationships between volunteer tourists and Costa Ricans. The volunteer tourists and residents worked in one place, but there was clear segregation between them. Often, volunteer tourists worked more closely with other volunteer tourists or with residents who are from the same continent or same language area in the center.

One day, I went to an Indigenous community center for volunteering. While Karina, George, and I were preparing breakfast together in the kitchen, I noticed that the indigenous people in the center sat by one another on the porch. Again, when we hosted a birthday party for a boy in the center, there were no interactions between the volunteer tourists and the indigenous people, except for the time when the volunteer tourists served soup and cookies to them. Karina and George were unsatisfied with their volunteer experience at The Bridge due to the lack of interaction.

Karina said during the interview that, "I don't think they [the Indigenous guests] are interested in communicating with volunteers. I also didn't have the time to interact with them. I was busy with soup and they left afterwards". While I was working in the centre, a boy there told me that most of the volunteers were just like a part of the landscape to him. Interestingly, despite the emphasis of the centre on the importance of building harmonious relationship between the indigenous people and others from abroad, this rarely happened.

To some volunteer tourists, the language barrier was a huge obstacle hindering them from developing relationship with local staff. David was volunteering at Wildlife Conservation Center. He was in the process of being employed as the manager of the centre. He described his relationship with local residents in the volunteer organization:

My relationship with local residents is definitely less intimate because we don't speak each other's language good enough to get close. We really can't talk in deeper level, so it is not close at all. I feel a lot of staff here are actually non-existing. How long I interact with the residents [local staff]? It is usually as short as possible because you only need to find out the things like rake, monkeys or other things. It is so hard to communicate. You can tell from both sides that you don't feel like communicating because there are a lot of other people who you are able to communicate with, so there is not a lot of communication or interaction.

People who had few conversations with local residents did not have the opportunity to learn about the culture of host country. Andrew explained:

I interact more with owners because they know English, so I can talk to them. But locals, [thinking] they know only little bit of English and I know little bit of Spanish so it is really hard to make real conversations about normal life. I talk with owners in English more about daily routines. But I don't talk a lot with the owners.

As volunteer tourists rarely communicate with local residents, they rarely shared their volunteering experience, problems or personal stories. Their conversations with residents were mostly about greetings. A respondent said "I talked to them [local residents] but only how are you? I don't talk personal problems with them", and "what is our vision, what is our distant future; so that is what we talk about usually". This lack of interaction could result in loss in understanding other's perspectives.

***Relationship with residents who are not involved in volunteer tourists' volunteer organizations.*** Volunteer tourism proclaims that volunteer tourists explore local residents' everyday lives by living and working "backstage". Previous studies claimed that volunteering with and/or volunteering for local residents will take the tourists beyond the staged tourist area to authentic daily life, where they can develop genuine friendship with real local people unlike tourists' money-based relationships (Crossley, 2012; Conran, 2011).

Despite the arguments of volunteer tourism studies and industry, the study participants rarely experienced friendships with local residents. Most of the interactions between volunteer tourists and local residents happened for a short time in traditionally considered tourist places such as shops, restaurants, bars, and beaches. After a short encounter, volunteer tourists and residents did not keep in touch with one another.

When asked about the depth of their relationships with the residents, twelve of the study subjects identified it as superficial, and not intimate. Only four study participants claimed that they have personal or/and close relationship with residents who were not involved in their volunteer organization.

All of these study subjects had four commonalities; moderate to fluent level of Spanish, stayed in the town more than two months, and had a personal desire to interact with local residents. Having shared activities with residents breaks the barriers between volunteer tourists and residents. George explained that he could get to know some residents while playing ping-pong with them:

From the beginning, I knew that I was going to be here for a long time so I really wanted to know local people here...I tried to get contact with some of them by just talking and also by activities like ping pong. That is the way to get to know people. It broke the ice between myself and a lot of residents just playing ping pong and doing some shared activity. It was really good to just play some sport activities. I really get into contact with them, see them again in somewhere like bars. When I met them we chat like “oh hi ping pong tomorrow, hola mañana [hello tomorrow] see you there and it is nice.

Cater (2008) argued that sincere communication can foster friendship between volunteer tourists and local residents. Similar to the previous studies, the four study participants were able to communicate in Spanish, thereby creating greater access for dialogue and friendship. Helen published articles in local newspaper in Spanish, and liked to talk in Spanish with her local

friends. Other study participants often talked with residents in Spanish, for instance, Donovan was a second generation of Mexicans grown up in the States. She worked on her Spanish for years and became very fluent, enabling many conversations with the cleaning lady in her hostel and a number of residents on the street.

One day, Donovan and I were with four other study participants at a bar. While other study subjects were spending time with one another, Donovan spent most of her time talking with 10 to 12 local residents. She introduced them to us saying”

They are my friends here”. During the interview, she said "I definitely have local friends here. You know hanging around [the] beach, we had dinner sometimes, but locals are not really eating out. They eat at home chatting in a bar dancing. We have neighbor. We have chats, we see one another and we chat through the fence.

The relationship with residents was valuable because the volunteer tourists could experience a sense of welcome, trust, and friendship not only with those involved in the organizations but the residents in the town as well. Relationship with the residents gave the four study participants more opportunities to explore the culture and people from the region. The personal relationships provide many benefits to those study participants such as friendship, and exploring daily lives of people in Puerto Viejo.

Four study participants stated that they developed friendships with some of the local residents. When I visited Ego Farm for an interview, Cat received a call from her friend in Puerto Viejo inviting her to visit a farm near by his house. A few days later, I came across her in Puerto Viejo, when she was about to leave for her country. She said she was spending her last time in the town with the local friend. Her relationship with people from the region made her feel “at home”. These experiences are valued because they allow participants to construct intimate

narratives about their friends from afar. Kacey said how much love she felt in the town during the interview:

I had only positive interactions with everyone because, you know, we are sharing what we are doing and why we are doing. It is all positive so there is close relationship in a sense that people care about what you are saying. They believe in you, and they are happy that you are here, and I feel everyone just love to make friends. When you make friend, that is very intimate and that make you feel good. I feel like I am leaving home in a way because I am leaving such a good friends I made. Definitely I made some personal relationships. I will be friends with them all my life you know and I met really awesome people. I definitely will meet them again hopefully that will be soon you know.

The four study participants had more opportunities than other study subjects to explore daily lives of local residents. These participants who built friendships with residents mentioned that they continued to hang out with their local friends once they made the first encounter with them. Helen, who is in her late 10s and has advanced Spanish ability, explained that she visited her local friend's baby shower while volunteering:

I know Barcelona. She is my friend. She is a local resident and a tour guide. We went to tours. I also made other friends here at this tour agency [where she volunteers] or through here. I met my housemate through this agency, and I went to a baby shower with her. However, many study participants were indifferent toward building relationships with residents. They stated that their relationships with local residents are only on the surface, with statements such as "I don't know many residents yet because I have not contacted them", and "I don't have friendship yet with any residents".

Volunteer tourists enjoyed the chance to meet local people, but their encounters were brief. Most of their interactions happened when volunteer tourists bought things at retail shops, or hang out bars. I observed that normally the interactions did not exceed few minutes. Volunteer tourists considered interactions with residents as providing memories, rather than lasting

friendships. The partial reason the study participants mentioned was their length of stay and their “coming and going” status. As opposed to when the study participants compared themselves to tourists, the study participants referred themselves as those who “come and leave” the town. Some of the study participants stated that “well, I am only going to be here one more week so building relationships will not really going to work”, “I enjoy just talking with them, little bit chat with them but I knew from the beginning, maybe that is not real relationship cause I am just staying here for 3 weeks”, “I don’t want to build relationship with residents. I am not gonna do take a lot of effort to make friendship because in few weeks I am gone and I will meet new people at other places”.

Andrew previously explained that he does not feel that he is a tourist because he feels comfortable in the town as like his home, and other tourists conferred resident status on him due to his volunteer status. However, he described his relationship with local residents as a “tourist relationship”:

Andrew: I think I am still a tourist for those people [residents]. They think about me just a guy from Netherlands who want to spend money. So it is just a tourist relationship. I think [that in my relationships] with local residents.

I: May I know what do you mean by tourist relationship?

Andrew: That means that I am a foreigner here who wants to spend money and only stays here a certain amount of time and then goes away. I don’t have a real relationship with local residents.

Another reason that hinders volunteer tourists building relationship with residents is the language barrier, leading to short and not-as-meaningful interactions. The study participants whose Spanish level was low said, “I interact with residents mostly just a few minutes because of language difficulties. Conversations are not deep here” and “Not so much. My Spanish is

horrible". These examples show that sincere communication with the host community is not always attained in every volunteer tourist situation.

Besides, interactions between volunteer tourists and local residents were often too short. Previous studies suggest that volunteer tourists are likely to build relationships with local residents through intensive interactions (Wearing & Wearing, 2001; Sin, 2010; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). However, the twelve study participants had just a few minutes of conversations with local residents, and they did not meet the residents who they encountered later on. Most of the encounters happened at the stores while purchasing items, on the street while passing by someone, or at the bars while dancing or drinking.

The twelve study participants stated that their encounters with local residents were short, and they did not meet the residents after their encounter saying that "When we went out or go for dinner, if somebody know local then introduce myself to local and we chat like 'Hi' or 'How are you?' a bit but nothing happens later", "It is more like this: friendly, but not to intimate level like 'Hello how are you' but you don't say 'Today I am feeling bad because my boyfriend blabla' You are not talking to much", and "I think a good occasion to meet people is when you go out at night because people are relaxed and have fun. When I go shopping it is like 1 or 2 min how are you? nice weather' just small talk".

This showed that being in one place with residents does not guarantee long-term and intensive interactions between volunteer tourists and local residents. Except for Donavon, Kacey, George, and Helen, I did not observe study participants spending leisure time with the residents. When I came across study participants, they were with other volunteer tourists in the same organization or other international tourists. Study participants showed a pattern of only interacting with residents during their volunteer hours. Although they interact with residents,

there were normally no conversations between volunteer tourists and residents. Study participants often wrote in their journal “Today is my day-off, No interaction with local residents”, “Today, I feel relaxed because today is my day off and I worked all week. Today, I did nothing with the residents”, and “Today is Sunday, so I relaxed. No volunteer work today. I went to the beach with other international people. No contact to residents today”. When they had a day-off from their volunteer work, study participants were with other volunteer tourists or alone to enjoy the town, surfing, laying on the beach, or clubbing which they deemed, “touristy activities which they were not so interested”.

**Relationship with volunteers and/or tourists.** Most of the volunteer tourists in this study have had little or no intensive contact with members of different racial and ethnic groups in Puerto Viejo. In contrast to the widespread ideas of genuine friendship and interactions between the host community and volunteer tourists, only a few study participants took the opportunity to build relationship with various local residents. Study participants tended to have meaningful interactions were with other tourists. When volunteer tourists felt that it is hard to integrate with residents of Puerto Viejo due to their cultural and language barriers, most of the study subjects resorted to meeting others of their own kind, such as other volunteer tourists and tourists at their volunteer organization and accommodations.

It was much easier for the volunteer tourists to interact with other tourists or volunteer tourists. Study participants explained that, they didn't feel like meeting the local people as long as they contact with the tourists. Having the same motivation such as ‘meeting others’ made it easier for them to connect with other tourists. A study participant who stayed in a Spanish Hostel with me explained that “It is easier to start a conversation with a tourist [rather than residents].

You have a common goal and you are both looking for contacts with other people. I think tourists are more open”.

The study participants explained that they spent time with other volunteer tourists in the same volunteer organization, or with those staying at the same hostel in order to share travel stories, take a group excursions, or volunteer. A study participant explained “I feel a stronger connection with tourists cause we are from the same country, same continent etc. so it was easier”.

*Relationships with tourists within a hostel.* While I was conducting the field research, I met seven volunteer tourists at a Spanish Hostel, a youth hostel, which provided volunteer information for free. Four people among the seven volunteer tourists there interviewed with me for this research. All the people staying in the hostel were fluent in English. Most of them were from Europe, but they spoke different languages. For this reason, most of the conversations were in English. Some of the volunteer tourists staying in the hostel volunteered together and spent time together with other backpackers visiting the beaches and the bars. Spanish Hostel served as the meeting place not only for backpackers but also for individual volunteer tourists coming to Puerto Viejo. The following anecdote from my field note illustrates a typical day in the youth hostel:

One day I met George and Karina in front of Spanish Hostel in order to volunteer at an English after school program. There was a new volunteer. George introduced me to Eric, who came from Norway and is staying in the hostel. Three of us biked to the institute, and volunteered there for 3 hours. While bicycling back to the hostel, three of us talked about bicycling in each one’s country. While coming back to the town, Eric said George, Karina and other international tourists staying in the hostel made appointment to hang out at Black beach. I joined them and had fun with them at the beach. I found it interesting that George and Karina, who volunteered together, appeared to have a very close

relationship. After we had fun at the beach, George and Karina, only the two, went to the back to the lodge, while Donovan, Eric, Andrew, I, and other tourists went to a restaurant for supper. Nathali, a tourist from Holland, led us to an Italian restaurant which served very delicious pizza and seafood. Some of us drank tropical fruit juices. The juices were served into a glass decorated with a piece of star fruit, seemingly tropical style. While having the drinks and food, we were talking about countries where we were from. We talked about job, employment, wages, holidays, and medical system in each one's country such as Holland, Norway, the State and South Korea. We rarely talked about our volunteer experiences, except for the time that Donovan asked me about my volunteer experiences at the English after school program, and told us her experience at an Indigenous territory. The conversations about Costa Rica were mainly about surfing, excursions, and travel plans. After supper, we went back to Spanish Hostel, and chilled with George and Karina while watching the TV show *Friends*. Although we rarely talked and learned about Costa Rica, after all it was a very good time. All of us built friendships with one another, and improved our understanding about each other's countries. We shared how much we enjoy our time in Costa Rica while doing excursions, surfing, and hiking in jungle.

As the example illustrates, volunteer tourists tended to spend more time with other tourists and/or volunteer tourists who stayed in the same hostel. While I had been staying in the hostel for three weeks, I had not seen any study participants who hung out with residents, even for a short time, except for George and Donovan. People at the hostel spent Christmas Eve, Christmas, and New Year only with their hostel-mates. A European interviewee in his middle 20s, who volunteered almost three months, said "It was easy to ask tourists to hang out because we stayed in the same house". While the interactions with residents were often limited to the volunteer time or visiting traditional tourists place such as beach, retail shops, or restaurants, the interactions with other volunteer tourists continued as long as they shared the same hostels. Sometimes the relationship continued through social networks, even after the tourists left the country. Indeed, all my study participants who stayed in the hostel added one another to their

Facebook friend lists before they left the hostel. Some of them keep in touch with one another through sharing photos, leaving comments on each other's Facebook wall. Through intensive interactions between people sharing the same accommodation, volunteer tourists learned about each other and built friendships extending across cultures and continents such as the West and the East.

During the field work, I became friends with my study participants and other tourists who stayed in the hostel, meeting them at restaurants and bars almost every night. When we had a Christmas banquet at the hostel, I cooked Asian food for them and taught some of them how to make dumplings, a Chinese cuisine. I felt my status as an international tourist became an important shared identity piece with my study subjects that made them feel safe with me and more willing to share their ideas for this research. These friendships blurred the boundaries between a researcher and study subjects.

Friendships between international tourists influence not only their personal experience, but also one's emotion toward the town. A recent university graduate German study participant from the hostel reflected on her experience on her journal:

I like Puerto Viejo, the atmosphere but I realized that I also like it more and more because of the nice people in this hostel. We are cooking together, hanging out, spending our free time, but they are all international people. None of them are from Costa Rica. In the evening we went out for drinking and had a fabulous night. I like it when locals and tourists all party together.

***Relationships within volunteer organization – Between the same nationalities.*** Some volunteer tourists built friendships mainly with other volunteer tourists from the same country while volunteering. It was commonly noted that volunteer tourists interacted frequently with other volunteer tourists who are from the same country, especially if they stay in the same accommodation or their volunteer organization hosted a number of people with the same

nationality. While volunteer tourists were developing relationships with people of the same nationality, efforts to meet residents were often forgotten. When I asked Drew about her relationships with the people in Wildlife Conservation Center, her volunteering organization, Drew explained that she got along with other Germans more frequently than others. She established in-group identity mainly with other German volunteer tourists, and this hindered her from building relationships with people from other countries, as well as local residents. She explained her friendship with other German volunteers at the same organization, comparing her relationship with other nationalities:

Drew: There is a gardener (resident). He is an OK guy. We always speak but not that much because here there are so many Germans. We are like volunteers ourselves. We are like volunteers, and we are one group. Unfortunately, there are only Germans in the group though. The main reason is that we are German volunteers, and we are one German group. We live together! So it makes it hard to get in touch with locals.

During the participant observation at Wildlife Conservation Center, I noted that the German volunteers frequently interacted with other German volunteer tourists. At Christmas time, Wildlife Conservation Center's managerial staff organized a banquet for their volunteers. Sixteen volunteer tourists from different countries such as Germany, Costa Rica, Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Canada, Italy, South Korea and Austria sat together at a table with five Costa Rican staff. All of the German volunteer tourists sat at the table next to each other and talked in German. While everyone was waiting for their food for about 15 minutes, the German volunteer tourists rarely talked with others from different regions, but kept speaking in German with other Germans. The next day, I found that a German volunteer coordinator often assigned work to German volunteer tourists in German. After the German volunteer tourists got a job to do from the coordinator, they worked together to feed the animals. In the afternoon, two German volunteer tourists were working in the kitchen washing dishes and despite the fact that there was

a Costa Rican kitchen staff in the kitchen, the two volunteer tourists had little conversation with her. Furthermore, they did not greet the kitchen staff when she left. At the end of the day, the group of German volunteer tourists went to the beach by themselves.

***Relationships within volunteer organization - between volunteers and tourists.*** Two volunteer organizations, Sustainable Education and Living Center (SELC) and Wildlife Conservation Center, operated programs to host tourists. It was a part of the volunteer tourists' work to provide hospitality to the visitors. Wildlife Conservation Center operated guided tours twice a day. Many travel books and blogs, such as Trip Advisor and Lonely Planet, introduced the center as a "must-visit". The organization was always crowded with around 30 to 35 visitors. Three volunteers at Wildlife Conservation Center worked as guides, and other volunteers also constantly interacted with visitors while Wildlife Conservation Center operated the programs. These interactions created diverse relationships between the volunteer tourists and other tourists.

First, the volunteer tourists can act as representatives of Puerto Viejo. For example, in the Wildlife Conservation Center, as most of the visitors are from abroad, the guides worked as a channel of the local culture of Puerto Viejo. The guides explained about endangered animals in Costa Rica, characteristics of each animals and how the animals came into the organization, noting the problems in Puerto Viejo that threatened wildlife, and the difficulties of releasing animals back into nature. Andrew, who volunteered in Wildlife Conservation Center for a month while staying in Puerto Viejo twelve weeks, mentioned in the interview that he felt tourists regarded him as a resident, saying, "I feel I belong to this town a little bit because when talking to tourists and meeting in a bar and you can say you volunteer at Wildlife Conservation Center. They see you a little bit local residents so it makes you feel something else than a tourist".

Second, volunteer tourists can make the visitors, mostly international tourists, misunderstand the local people by telling them stereotypical information. When I joined the group tour in Wildlife Conservation Center, a guide explained some problems with wildlife animals:

We have problems. One is dog. Americans and European came here with their pit bull. However, pitbull kills a lot of animals. Second is ignorance. Locals kill sloth and wild life animals. They don't care. Third, there is superstition among locals. Locals have myth on animals, so that kids stone snakes, and locals kill wildlife animals a lot.

Although the guide mentioned the problems caused by Europeans and North Americans, the guide also highlighted the local residents as the cause of problems by telling the story twice. The guide described local people as the culprits of endangering wildlife animals. However, she disassociated Americans and Europeans from the problem by describing that the problems caused by them are caused by their dogs, not by the people. After she explained that, the guide led us to toucans and parrots. When a visitor asked the guide how the birds came into Wildlife Conservation Center, the guide explained, "Local kids here kill wildlife birds to have fun or to make souvenir. Some of the birds here were found in shoeboxes. Locals pet the wildlife animals but they have no knowledge. It is important to educate locals". During the tour, the guide did not explain the positive aspects of local residents or their efforts toward wildlife conservation. She did not mention that locals take care of animals. She also neglected that local residents have knowledge on animals, and plants. For example, several local residents in Puerto Viejo work as professional natural tour guides, and/or natural herbalists.

While these arguments could be valid, it seemed that the guides were fostering a neo-colonial perspective. On one hand, there are Europeans or North Americans, and on the other hand, there are local Puerto Viejo people-the former cares about nature, has the "correct" values,

and takes responsibility, while the latter generally has none of that. By imposed justification, the Europeans and North Americans inculcate the authority to teach, or “educate”, the locals, who are not “educated” and do not have the right values. By illustrating the systemic permeation of all aspects of the native peoples’ lives and attempting to impose a new culture, the local people were led to believe that they should serve and learn from the new settlers (Gibson, 2009).

Third, volunteer tourists could build short-term friendships (or just close relationships, or memorable experiences) with visitors based on their shared interest. SELC, a sustainable farm, operates diverse kinds of ecological educational programs such as yoga classes, and permacultural design courses. People interested in sustainable lifestyles visit the farm for a day, or stay in the farm for a few weeks to take the courses. While I was staying there for few days, I observed that the visitors, volunteer tourists and staff discussed ecological issues with one another such as global warming, vegetarianism, home vegetable gardens, and the problems of MSG. Volunteer tourists and visitors often interacted with one another while learning, eating, and working at the farms. Ru, who is from Mexico and was taking five months gap tour, explained:

Here there is a premaculture farm owned by Americans, and most people come here from all over the world. There is not much difference between the staff and guests. We often become friends. There is a Costa Rican ecological community. The founder is leading that community, and he [the founder] invited all the people for New Year’s Eve. I know that community. A lot of them were from the USA, Costa Rica, and Mexico—yeah, all over the world.

## **Chapter Six.**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Summary of the Case Study**

This study applies and adapts the theory of Emotional Solidarity suggested by Woosnam (2008, and 2009) in order to explore the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents from volunteer tourists' perspective. Emotional solidarity can be interpreted as emotional closeness and sense of solidarity that binds individuals together as part of a group (Durkheim, 1915, /2001; Collins 1976; Woosnam & Norman, 2009). Woosnam suggested that “welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding are three dimensions or factors of emotional solidarity” (Woosnam, 2011, p.618). My study approach and analysis has been based on the theory of emotional solidarity suggested by Woosnam.

Through presentation of interviews, conversations, observation, and journals from study participants, I have shown how volunteer tourists experienced their relationships with residents. I found that the close relationship between volunteer tourists and residents is primarily important on the construction of identity. However emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and residents rarely happened in the real world. I will now briefly summarize the findings of this study in three parts: volunteer tourists' self-identity, experienced otherness, and relationship.

1) Volunteer tourists' identities based on emotional closeness.

Emotional closeness with residents was an important reason that made study participants want to be volunteers rather than tourists. Study participants argued that they have genuine relationship with local residents, unlike tourists whose relationship with residents are based on money. Through the narratives, volunteer tourists showed their superiority to regular tourists who are in their minds only crass consumers.

## 2) “Otherness” between Volunteer Tourists and Residents

Most of the study participants could not articulate their similarities with residents, nor did show any desire to align themselves with the residents living in the town. Study participants developed their perceptions toward Puerto Viejo as ‘poor but happy people’, and ‘under-developed and exotic nation’, which differs from their own culture which is ‘rich but stressed people’ and symbolizes a ‘developed nation’. Study participants made distinctions between themselves and residents regarding intentions for community development. They described themselves as people who care about the community, while local residents were indifferent toward their own community. Although the study participants recognized that local residents in their volunteer organizations contribute to make change in their own community, study participants recognized them as exceptional cases.

## 3) Volunteer Tourists’ Actual Relationships with Residents

Unlike what the volunteer tourists argued about their relationships with residents, most of the volunteer tourists' relationships were between the groups, limited and superficial. Most of the study subjects were indifferent to building relationships with residents, despite the fact that they are volunteers to build genuine relationships with residents. Many of the study participants said that residents are “part of [the] landscape”. This made volunteer tourists’ claims doubtful.

Most of the volunteer tourists mainly interacted with other tourists or other volunteer tourists who were sharing the same accommodation with them, or working with them. Therefore, the emotional quality of the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents were in general no greater than mass tourists.

## Implications

**Theoretical implications.** This research contributes to tourism studies mainly in two aspects: the expansion of emotional solidarity theory; and tourists' perspectives on their relationship with residents.

Firstly, the study explores the theory of emotional solidarity from tourists' viewpoints. The relationships between tourists and residents have been extensively studied in tourism studies. Most of the studies focused on residents' perceptions of tourists coming into their community and tourism impacts on their own community (e.g. Woosna, 2013; Raymond and Brown, 2007). This study focused on the other side of the continuum. Respectively, in this study the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents from tourists' perspectives were assessed, while revealing how volunteer tourists explain their emotional relationships with residents, how they view commonalities and differences between themselves and the people in Puerto Viejo area, and how they build their social relationships with residents in practice.

Volunteer tourists who were able to speak Spanish seemed to have built a close relationship with residents. However, most of the volunteer tourists' relationships with residents were limited and superficial, unlike what the volunteer tourists argued about their relationship with residents. This research suggested that volunteer tourists' desire to disassociate themselves from "tourists" can be one of the elements causing the difference. Future research needs to examine emotional solidarity in relation to volunteer tourists' stereotypes about tourists, as well as the level of language ability that is spoken in tourism destinations.

Secondly, this study applied theory of emotional solidarity to volunteer tourism where residents and tourists are from different cultural and language background. This is the first case of the study, since previous studies studied sites where most of the tourists were from the same

language and cultural background as the residents. Previous studies have shown that tourists experience intensive emotional solidarity with residents while travelling. In the previous studies, tourists showed shared beliefs, shared behaviors, and had interactions with the residents, which would contribute negatively to emotional solidarity. However, this research did not follow this pattern.

The theory of emotional solidarity suggests that the tourists' shared beliefs, shared behaviour and interactions with residents will contribute to their emotional solidarity experienced with residents in their tourist destinations (Woosnam, 2013). It is, however, noted from this study that shared beliefs had little contribution to emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and residents. In this study, sixteen volunteer tourists commonly stated that they share similar goals, and similar interests related to their volunteer projects with the staff in their organizations. However, there were differences in emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and local residents, and volunteer tourists and foreign staff. Only four volunteer tourists stated that they have personal or friendship with local residents, while nine volunteer tourists stated they have personal relationship or friendships with foreign staff who share similar culture or language with them.

Shared behaviour did provide opportunities for interaction, but it is hard to conclude if shared behaviour contributes to emotional solidarity in this study. All volunteer tourists participated in similar activities with residents. Both residents and volunteer tourists liked to go to bars, go to the beach, go surfing, and so on. Thirteen volunteer tourists worked with local residents during volunteering. However, volunteer tourists stated that they did not build close relationships with residents. Fourteen volunteer tourists stated that they did not feel close to

some residents, did not make friends, and they did not show sympathetic understandings of the residents.

There were differences between the four study participants, who could build friendships with residents, and other study participants, who had superficial relationships with residents such as relatively long lengths of stays in Puerto Viejo, desire to interact with residents, and Spanish-speaking ability. The importance of the Spanish-speaking ability is obvious. Volunteer tourists, who had little Spanish ability, said they could not develop friendships with residents due to a lack of ability to communicate in Spanish. Other volunteer tourists, who could build friendships, appeared to have conversations in Spanish with residents when they were involving in similar activities with residents, such as volunteering and social activities. Study participants who built personal relationships with residents stated that they talked to residents in Spanish, and it provided opportunities to build close relationships with some of them. This study suggests that verbal communication can be an important factor that establishes emotional solidarity with residents.

**Practical implications.** An important objective of VT is to create harmonious relationships between volunteer tourists (or volunteer-sending countries) and local residents (or volunteered countries) (Conran, 2011; Ha, 2009, ; Kim, 2011; Raonatti, 2012; Brown, 2005). Emotional solidarity theory suggests that through engaged experience between volunteer tourists and residents, the binary opposition of self and other is deconstructed, which allows individuals to expand the construction of the self to include caring for others, and their values and their community. Consequently, the tourist experience allows an individual to accommodate others to become a part of them, so that self is no longer prioritized over another (Wearing and Wearing, 2001). Although there are criticisms arguing that emotional closeness does not automatically

bring cross-cultural understandings and structural equality, the friendships between volunteer tourists and residents can be the first step for global peace at individual levels. However, these positive relationships between volunteer tourists and residents are not guaranteed benefits of volunteer tourism.

This study highlighted the need for better training as a means of making connections between residents and volunteer tourists. Volunteer organization staff was the sole force of continuous interaction with both residents and volunteer tourists; more attention should be given to the role of staff in making connections between volunteer tourists and residents. Below are some recommendations for improving volunteer tourism experience by improving volunteer organization staff training.

First, volunteer organization staff can create social occasions in which both volunteers and residents participate. Study participants who built friendships with residents commonly spent time with residents after volunteering by doing sport activities, chatting, and having dinners together. Local staff and volunteer tourists can visit places together or have meal at local food restaurants. A few friends of staffs, who are from the region and reside in the community, can join such activities. Volunteer tourism organizations can encourage their volunteer tourists to use home stays with local residents. Three study participants in this study, who built close relationships with residents, commonly used the same accommodations with local residents. They similarly stated that staying with the local staff encouraged them to have deep and personal relationships with them. As long as the expenses for home stays go to local residents, home stays can provide economic benefits for the community.

Second, volunteer organizations should encourage their volunteer program participants to learn the language of their travel destinations. This research showed that study participants who

had Spanish-speaking abilities and communicated with residents in Spanish could build cross-cultural friendships. Volunteer organizations might need to run language education programs, encourage participants to learn the language prior to departing, or encourage volunteer tourists to speak the destination's language with local staff. Volunteer tourism organizations could operate a language partner program that offers the opportunity for its volunteers to meet with people interested in helping them to improve their conversational language skills. This might provide residents opportunities to make an income.

Third, volunteer organization staff can make groups of volunteers which consist of international volunteer tourists and local residents, or residents from the country. During the research, I observed that volunteer tourists built strong relationships with their co-volunteer tourists who were from different culture and language backgrounds. Volunteering with residents from the tourism destinations may facilitate interactions because both volunteer tourists and local residents share the same identity as volunteers, and spend extensive time together.

Forth, volunteer organization staff can run an education program in which both residents and volunteer tourists participate. This research showed that being in a place does not automatically allow better understandings. Volunteer tourists' understanding was not so much different from their previous knowledge of Puerto Viejo, which may have included stereotypes. Volunteer organization staff can invite residents to their program so that volunteer tourists and residents both share their perceptions toward the town and people, and the differences and similarities of the culture. For example, a faith-based volunteer organization can invite residents through other religious centers into a community that shares the same faith. These activities could not only improve the mutual understanding of those involved but could also create friendships among residents and volunteer tourists through intensive communication and shared

religion. These activities are valuable considering that misconceptions and misunderstandings can influence individuals' notions of the cultural hierarchy.

### **Limitations**

There were three (observed) limitations in the current study: language barriers, and limited access to data. I collected data through methods such as interviews and research journals in English which is not my first language. This caused limitation on communication between the study participants and the researcher. My supervisor and thesis committee professors proofread my interview questions to correct grammatical errors and modify word choice. I printed research questionnaires ahead of interviews and provided them to each interviewee ahead of interview in order to reduce influence from language barriers and to improve communication. Before the interview, I asked each interviewee to ask me questions on the interview questions, if they could not understand any of them. During the interview, I paraphrased their answers in order to check if my understanding was correct.

Some non-English speaking volunteer tourists had difficulties in communication, specifically due to their shyness with speaking and writing in English, as well as their limited English vocabulary. In order to help with their communication, I encouraged them to take time answering questions, and to speak their minds regardless of grammar or words.

Excluding the Spanish-only speaking population was another shortcoming of this research. According to this research, language played a crucial role in terms of building relationships between volunteer tourists and local residents, and improving knowledge about Puerto Viejo. Study participants who spoke fluent Spanish often communicated with residents and had a better relationship with residents compared to those who had low Spanish ability. If I could include the Spanish-only speaking population in this study, this study could provide more

information about the role of language on relationship forming. I could compare the population between volunteer tourists who were not able to speak Spanish and those who were able to speak Spanish, and analyze the similarities and differences of the two groups in terms of relationships with local residents.

Limited access to data was another limitation of this study. I could not conduct participant observation with study participants from a Macaw conservation organization, but only conducted interviews with them. Meanwhile I spent extensive time with study participants who volunteered at Wildlife Conservation Center, worked at The Bridge, and stayed in the same hostel. This difference in access to the data could result in unbalanced results.

Language barriers caused other limitations in terms of access to information. I could not understand what was going on when people were talking in a language other than English. I found that sometimes volunteer tourists, staff, and residents were talking about their experiences in Puerto Viejo in their own language with their peers. These conversations were useful for this research because these conversations were relatively free from the researcher's influence. Sometimes I asked them to translate in English when they spoke, but it was hard to ask them all the time.

### **Future study**

Future study can be done examining how pre-held beliefs, language, and customs influence the development of emotional solidarity. A study could be done to research the differences in emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and residents. A study can be conducted in which both groups are from different cultural, and/or language backgrounds, and another study can be pursued in which both groups are from similar cultural, and/or language backgrounds. In this study, volunteer tourists stated that they did not form close relationships

with residents nor develop empathy with them. Volunteer tourists' stated differences in culture and language were primary obstacles. Conversely, tourists and residents who shared similar language, racial, and cultural backgrounds showed a high degree of emotional solidarity in previous studies (for example Woosnam 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013). Similarities in language and cultural background could be the reason that tourists and residents showed high degrees of emotional solidarity in previous studies. Future studies need to be done to examine whether there are differences in emotional solidarity between the two groups of volunteer tourists.

Future research need to be conducted to explore the anti-tourism attitudes among volunteer tourists. This study presented that volunteer tourists strongly identified themselves as volunteers rather than tourists regarding their integration with residents. Volunteer tourists portrayed tourists as those who spend money for their own vacation, and who do not interact with residents. Ironically, the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents were no greater than the "tourist's relationship" as this study participants portrayed. Volunteer tourists stated that they did not develop close relationships with residents, and they got along with other tourists rather than residents. Future research should be done if volunteer tourists' feelings toward their relationships with residents resulted from their desire to disassociate themselves from tourists, and where the negative attitude toward tourists came from.

Volunteer tourism should be more researched from critical perspectives. It is crucial to research the cultural hierarchy or cultural superiority perspectives that volunteer tourists may have toward their volunteering community in relation to colonialism. This research showed that volunteer tourists identified themselves as those who make changes in the town while residents were perceived as those who are indifferent to their own community issues. These helping

narratives could bring hierarchy between countries while portraying “one as savior and others as being saved” (Conran, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Volunteer tourism professionals and academics promoted volunteer tourism as a method that can bring global peace. The core ethos suggests an authentic and close relationship that is built between volunteer tourists (or volunteer sending countries) and residents (or volunteer hosting countries) based on volunteering (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). Studies suggested that volunteering takes tourists beyond the “tourist zone” because tourists work and live with local residents in residential area during their volunteering (Kim, 2011, Woosnam, 2013; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). This environment of volunteering allows both tourists and residents to have intensive interactions. Scholars demonstrated that as interactions between the two group increases, the two groups have more chances to build mutual friendships which can reduce tension and can change an unequally structured world. “Feelings of authentic and close relationship” became the core value of volunteer tourism by its industry. The close relationship between volunteer tourists and local residents is often what motivated volunteer tourists and justified volunteer tourism. However, there are growing numbers of studies that criticize the sentimentality of volunteer tourism.

One argument is that sentimentality can be based on unequal power laden exchanges between volunteer tourists and residents. Conran (2011) argues that the relationships between volunteer tourists and residents are based on unequal structure of the world, as residents in “Third World” associate volunteer tourists as the symbols of developed, wealthy, and modern “First World”. The residents desire to have intimate relationships with tourists from “the First World” as their relationships can boost their social status (Conran, 2011). Hence, although

volunteer tourists experience emotional closeness with residents, it does not change inequality, rather it perpetuates that.

Another argument is that emotional relationships depoliticize unequal structure of the world. Mostafanezhad (2013) argues that volunteer tourism repackage development as a sentimental experience by making volunteer tourism look more authentic through affective and empathetic exchange between volunteer tourists and local residents. Through the discourse of sentimental experience, volunteer tourism overshadows the inequality between the First World and the Third World, and “perpetuates the idea of the apolitical consumer who is neither a part of the problem nor the solution” (p.495).

The positive sentimentality toward local residents became an important theme in humanitarian projects for the sake of prosperity of its business (Mostafanezhad, 2011), despite the fact that emotional experiences does not always bring positive relationships between volunteer tourists and local residents, as well as global peace.

Volunteer organizations, such as NGOs attract their future volunteer tourists with the themes “close relationship with local residents”, “immersion into local culture”, and “meeting new people” (one may see Cross-cultural Solution, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2011; Sin, 2011). Feelings of closeness and friendship with local residents became marketable products that show future customers the possibilities of having an authentic experience during their time. This marketing portrayed volunteer tourism as something which can automatically lead its participants to have a genuine relationship with local residents, and an authentic experience of local culture which “makes change in the world.”

NGOs, one of the major stakeholders of volunteer tourism, promoted the positive image of volunteer tourism while criticizing tourism in general. In the discourse of volunteer tourism,

the image of destination countries became simplified and vulnerable that can be harmed by tourists. Bird and Hughes (1997) argues that “this process occurs notably with reference to culturally resonant “icons” such as “wilderness” (an unsullied or original state of nature), “jungle” (a threatening and chaotic place), or “rainforest” (science, beauty and vulnerability). Tourists in general were portrayed as those who harm the fragile land for their own enjoyment. They were portrayed as those who “do not learn the local culture, do not interact with local people”, and “stay in the hostel for themselves or all-inclusive resort that has little to do with improving local economy”. Meanwhile, volunteer tourists are understood as the ones who rescue the unequal relationships between tourists and residents while protecting the nature and culture of tourist destinations through volunteer[ing]” as efforts to “make conservation pay” involve “sustainable” commercial practices such as eco-tourism (see Woosnam, 2013; Kim, 2011; McIntosh & Zarah, 2008).

This positive image of volunteer tourism catches the eyes of young people who have a desire to disassociate themselves from other tourists, and are interested in having authentic experiences during their time abroad (Jacobsen, 2000; Carter, 2008). By purchasing an alternative product from volunteer organizations, the consumers can differentiate themselves from tourists who seemingly bring negative influences on their tourist destinations.

Studies (Mostafanezhad, 2013; Bryant & Goodman 2004) have demonstrated that this tendency is in line with emerging ethical consumerism in the market. Mostafanezhad (2013) found the commonality between volunteer tourism and alternative consumers in that both emphasize social justice through ethical consumption. Ethical consumerism is a type of consumer activism. It is “practiced through “positive buying” in that ethical products are favored, or “moral boycott,” that is negative purchasing and company-based purchasing”

(Mandal, 2012, p.375). Within these new moral economies, consumption has increasingly become the new activism. Likewise, international volunteers believe they can bring justice in the world by consuming their international volunteer products, and their volunteer abroad experience will bring an improved relationship between themselves (or the “First World”) and residents (or “Third World”).

Volunteer tourists are likely to disassociate themselves from other tourists because they have “genuine relationship with residents which goes beyond money exchange”, “doing volunteering in their visiting town”, and “learning about the locals in an authentic local village where is different from tourist town”. As shown in the study findings, the volunteer tourists were defensive about being called tourists, as they have a desire to be different from tourists. John (2009) argues that due to the increasingly sophisticated segment of tourists, tourism industry “seek to imbue a deeper sense of meaning to promotion, and communication of tourism services based on experiential attributes” (p. 25). This is reflected in the marketing of volunteer programs offered by the volunteer organization in Puerto Viejo. The organizations that the study participants were involved with rarely used the word “tourism” or “tourists”; rather, the organizations used words such as “volunteers” and “internship”, along with the emphasis on “local”.

However, it is questionable whether volunteer tourism is superior to so-called “mass tourism” in terms of building harmonious relationships between volunteer tourists and residents which can be a foundation of global peace. First of all, in this study, volunteer tourists and residents rarely had meaningful relationships. Their feelings of closeness were merely feelings which boosted the identity of volunteer tourists from “tourists” to “volunteers”. While I was conducting participant observations during and after official volunteer hours, I observed twelve

study participants got a long with only their peers such as their co-volunteers or those who stay in the same hostel. Volunteer tourists enjoyed the chance to meet local people, but their interactions happened when volunteer tourists buy things at retail shops, or hang out bars. The volunteer tourists also explained their relationships with local residents were superficial.

More than half of study participants in general stated that they did not have close relationships with both local residents outside the volunteer organizations and local residents working in the volunteer organizations. Most of study participants had difficulties to build relationships with local residents due to cultural and language differences. Although most of study participants worked with local residents in the same organization, they rarely communicated with each other due to language barrier. Volunteer tourists tended to have better relationships with residents working in their volunteer organizations, but most of the residents were from the so-called “First World,” where most of the volunteer tourists were from. The foreign staff and volunteer tourists are from the same country or continent and share the same language.)

However, this finding does not mean that intimate relationships are not formed among tourists and local residents. In fact, there are prevalent patterns of intimacy between foreign women and local men that do take place in Puerto Viejo. Frohlick noted in her research that foreign women from North America or European countries experience intimate relationships with local men, and their intimacies shape the women’s decisions to remain in the country (Frohlick, 2007, 2009). Frohlick argued that these intimate relationships often come about when the women are traveling through study-abroad programs with development-and-aid groups (Frohlick, 2007). Therefore, it is better to understand this study’s findings, as individuals’

backgrounds, motivations, and language ability can be important. The notion that volunteer tourism itself can bring cross-cultural friendships may be a myth.

Second, volunteer tourists rarely developed cultural understandings. Volunteer tourists hardly changed their pre-held stereotypes against Puerto Viejo and its local residents. Most of the study participants understood Puerto Viejo as a place with beach, sun, and 'poor but happy people' but could not expand their knowledge further.

Third, study participants rarely found commonalities with local residents; rather, they were aware of differences between themselves and residents. They rarely got to know more about their shared similarities with local residents, but developed differences from local residents, mostly because of their stereotypes toward "The First World" and "The Third World". Study participants made a clear distinction between Puerto Viejo and their home country regarding issues of poverty.

Volunteer tourists found themselves as "contributors" but regarded residents as those who are indifferent toward their community development. Volunteer tourists appeared not to critically examine their ideas of 'someone [who] is savior and others (residents) are being saved', although the idea has many similarities with colonial perspectives. Even though study participants recognized that some of the residents contribute to their own community through their projects, several interviewees implied that the positive contributions of local residents were little in general. Hence, the relationship between volunteer tourists and residents were in general no greater than "mass tourists" which volunteer tourists themselves criticized.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment letter – Volunteer tourism organization

Dear

Hello

My name is Hanjung Lee, a graduate student currently enrolled in Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba, Canada. I am writing to ask if you would allow me to approach the volunteers working in your organization to see if they would be willing to participate in my study. The total time that this will require of your volunteers is between 60 to 180 minutes over the course of their volunteer experience.

I am doing my Master Degree thesis, entitled *emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and local residents in Costa Rica*. I hope to understand how volunteer tourists build relationships with local residents, and how they feel about themselves and the local residents. In order to understand the perspective of volunteer tourists, I would like to approach volunteers who are working in your site and ask for their participation. I will introduce myself by giving presentation about my research to the general volunteers, and approaching individual volunteers, while I too am volunteering at your organization.

The study involves two one-to-one in person on-site interview, a one time post volunteer visit interview, and participant observation at public places such as the volunteering site, public dining hall, and during official extracurricular time. Interviews should take between 30 and 90 minutes to complete. I will also ask volunteers if they would be willing to allow me to access and use material from their social network sites, show me their pictures taken during their volunteering, and write debrief of their daily living.

This research study has been approved by The Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba. No risk beyond activities of daily living is expected from participation of this research study. There are no sensitive questions. If you want, I will send you the copy of interview guide, and the copy of approval from Ethics Board.

I sincerely hope that you will allow me to conduct my research at your organization and complete my research study. If I can participate, I hope to start my volunteering between November 20<sup>th</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>, and to leave around January 5<sup>th</sup>. I have attached the introduction to my research, an informed-consent document, and my resume to this letter. If you allow me to participate in your volunteer program, would you please sign the document and email it to me? If you need any other information, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you

Sincerely,

Hanjung Lee.

## Appendix B-1

### Informed Consent (For volunteers)

**Title of the Study:**

Emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and local residents in Costa Rica, A Case Study

**Researcher:**

Hanjung Lee, Master of Art candidate in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

**Contact Information:**

Hanjung Lee can be contacted at 1- (204) 470-7962 (Canada), ‘ ‘ (contact number while staying in the country)

**Email Address:**volunteeremotional@gmail.com

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

**This study is partial fulfillment of the requirement for my Master’s degree in Arts.**

**I. Study purpose**

· The purpose of this study is to understand the emotional relationship between volunteers and local residents in Costa Rica. One of the often stated outcomes of volunteer activities and volunteer tourism is the understanding that develops between volunteer guests and hosts, indeed this is often feature prominently in volunteer recruitment .Through interviews, observation, photos and other data sources this study will explore how volunteer tourists build relationships with local people, and how they feel about themselves and the local residents. .

**II. What your participation will involve?**

- Participants' routines at public places such as the volunteering site, public dining hall, and during official extracurricular time can be recorded for the purpose of the research
- You will be asked to write a daily review that describes your experience and might include reflections upon your feeling and reactions to daily routines and interactions. This will be kept in a research journal updated during your participation in the volunteer program
- The researcher will ask you if you are willing to agree (or not) to me accessing and using material from your social network sites, and show me your pictures taken during your volunteering. If you agree, please sign on the consent form, Social Network Permission Form will be provided.
- You will be asked to participate in three separate interviews, two in the field, and one after your volunteer program. The interview can take between 30 min to 90 min. The interview will be audio-recorded, with your permission. The audio recording consent form will be provided. The interview will be transcribed for later analysis. If you do not want your interview recorded the researcher will take written notes of the interview. After the completion of this study, the researcher will destroy all data.

### **III. The benefits from your participation**

- You will be compensated for your time as stated below
- You will be able to reflect and share your volunteer experiences

### **IV. Confidentiality**

- Any information provided in the interview, research journal and researcher's note will remain completely confidential
- The researcher will use only fictitious name on all data
- Only the researcher in the study will see your individual responses

·The anonymized transcription, written analyses of interviews, researcher's note and final report of this study will be shared with the researcher's advisor and two committee members at University of Manitoba, Canada.

·Your recorded interview responses and the transcription of the interview will be stored electronically on a password protected computer, and a second copy will be stored on a password protected USB.

·After the completion of this study, the researcher will destroy all data

·In any subsequent publication of this research any personal information you have shared including your occupation, age range, and previous volunteer experience will be disclosed in a completely anonymous fashion.

#### **V. Risk**

·No risk beyond activities of daily living is expected from participation of this research study.

·It is possible that you may feel stress about being observed or answering questions.

·If at any time any place, you feel uncomfortable being observed or interviewed. You can ask me to stop

·You may withdraw your participation from this study at any time you wish.

#### **VI. Compensation**

·You will receive refreshments, a\$10 value of gift card, and 3 souvenir post cards, and Korean traditional souvenir book mark for participating.

·The compensation above will be provided in person either when you provided me with signed informed consent.

·After final report is finished, the researcher will post a plain language of summary of this research to the webpage of the researcher's supervisor by April 1 (04.01), and inform that to you.

All study participants will be available to read it.

·If you want, you will receive the transcripts and/or summary of the result of the study by email or to your address as you indicate on the Participants' Request for Transcripts & Summary of Results form. The anticipated date you will receive the final result is April 1 (04.01).

### **VII. Freedom to participate**

·Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study, if you do not want. ·If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time of the study. Once you withdraw from this study, you can request the withdrawal of your data.

·You are encouraged to decline to provide any kinds of information that you are uncomfortable providing.

### **VIII. Approval of research**

This research has been approved by Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or e-mail Margaret\_Bowman@umanitoba.ca.

If you have any concern after the study, you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. You could reach the researcher, Hanjung Lee at xxx-xxxx(Costa Rica– note; At this time, I do not have contact number in Costa Rica); 1-204-470-7962 (Canada), or email m45film@naver.com

You may also contact the research supervisor, Dr. Michael Campbell at 1- 204-474-8514 (Canada), or email [ichael\\_campbell@umanitoba.ca](mailto:ichael_campbell@umanitoba.ca).

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.**

**This research has been approved by the If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

-----Provide for Signatures as Required-----

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Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B-2

### Informed Consent (For Organization)

**Title of the Study:**

Emotional solidarity between volunteer tourists and local residents in Costa Rica, A Case Study

**Researcher:**

Hanjung Lee, Master of Art candidate in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

**Contact Information:**

Hanjung Lee can be contacted at 1- (204) 470-7962 (Canada), ‘ ‘ (contact number while staying in the country),

**Email Address:** volunteeremotional@gmail.com

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

**This study is partial fulfillment of the requirement for my Master’s degree in Arts.**

**I. Study purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the emotional relationship between volunteers and local residents in Costa Rica. The focus of my research is to understand the emotional relationship between volunteer tourists and local residents. I hope to understand how volunteer tourists build relationships with local residents, and how they feel about themselves and the local residents.

**II. What your participation will involve?**

·You will allow the researcher to approach the volunteer tourists at your organization for her Master's thesis research

·The researcher will conduct on-site one on one interview twice and post interview once with 14 volunteers. The interview can take around 30 min to 90 min. The interview will be audio-recorded, depend on study participants' permission.

·The researcher will conduct participant observation at public places such as the volunteering site, public dining hall, and during official extracurricular time during the researcher's participation in your volunteer program,

·The researcher will ask volunteer tourists if they are willing to agree (or not) to me accessing and using material from their social network sites, and show me their pictures taken during their volunteering If the volunteers agree, they will sign on the consent form, Social Network Permission Form will be provided.

·The researcher give a presentation to general volunteer tourists at your organization about the general idea of her study, such as risk, compensation, purpose, and the purpose of her participation in the volunteer program at your organization

### **III. The benefits from your participation**

·The international volunteers of your organization will be able to reflect their relationship with the local people and share your volunteer experiences

·You will receive the final report of the study·

### **IV. Confidentiality**

·Any information provided in the interview, research journal and researcher's note will remain completely confidential

- The researcher will use only fictitious name on all data, so that third person will not be able to recognize your organization
- Only the researcher in the study will see your individual responses
- The anonymized transcription, written analyses of interviews, researcher's note and final report of this study will be shared with the researcher's advisor and two committee members at University of Manitoba, Canada.
- The recorded interview responses and the transcription of the interview will be stored electronically on a password protected computer, and a second copy will be stored on a password protected USB.
- After the completion of this study, the researcher will destroy all data
- In any subsequent publication of this research the study participants' occupation, age range, previous volunteer experience may be disclosed in a completely anonymous fashion.

#### **V. Risk**

- No risk beyond activities of daily living is expected from participation of this research study.
- It is possible that the volunteers at your organization may feel stress about being observed or answering questions.
- At any time and any place, you can ask me to stop observing or interviewing, if you feels uncomfortable due to the observation, or interview.
- You can ask me to withdraw my participation in your organization, if you consider the risk caused by my participation is serious, and there is no way to deal with it.

#### **VI. Compensation**

- Study participants will receive refreshments, a\$10 value of gift card, and 3 souvenir post cards, and Korean traditional souvenir book mark for participating.

- The compensation above will be provided in person either when participants provided me with signed informed consent or at the last on-site interview, depend what study participants want.
- After final report is finished, the researcher will post a plain language of summary of this research to the webpage of the researcher's supervisor by April 1 (04.01), and inform that to all study participants. All study participants will be available to read it.
- If you want, you will receive the transcripts and/or summary of the result of the study by email or to your address as you indicate on the Participants' Request for Transcripts & Summary of Results form. The anticipated date you will receive the final result is April 1 (04.01).

### **VII. Freedom to participate**

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The volunteers do not have to participate in this study.
- Volunteers are encouraged to decline to provide any kinds of information, if they are uncomfortable providing the information.
- Although you allow me to participate, you can ask me to withdraw my participation from your organization. Once I withdraw from this study and both your organization and the study participants want me to withdraw all of their data, you can request withdraw of all data.

### **VIII. Approval of research**

This research has been approved by Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or e-mail

Margaret\_Bowman@umanitoba.ca.

If you have any concern after the study, you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. You could reach the researcher, Hanjung Lee at xxx-

xxxx(Costa Rica– note; At this time, I do not have contact number in Costa Rica); 1-204-470-7962 (Canada), or email m45film@naver.com You also could reach the research supervisor, Dr. Michael Campbell at 1- 204-474-8514 (Canada), or email ichael\_campbell@umanitoba.ca.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.**

**This research has been approved by the [insert full name of appropriate REB]. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

-----Provide for Signatures as Required-----

-----

Participant’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Participants' Request for Transcripts & Summary of Results

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for devoting time to participating in the study. Your response of the interview will be faithfully transcribed for future analysis.

Please check the following opinions:

I want to receive interview transcript to review;

I do not want to receive interview transcript to review;

I want to receive the summary of preliminary results of the study;

I do not want to receive the summary of preliminary results of the study;

I want to receive the final report of the study;

I do not want to receive the final report of the study.

If you check "I want to receive interview transcript to review/summary of preliminary result of the study/final report of the study", please provide your name, mail address or e-mail address. I will send related information to you directly.

Name:

Address:

Zip Code:

E-mail address:

Your personal information will remain confidential. This document will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Once entered into a password protected computer, this form will be shredded. In addition, your contact information will be destroyed after the study is finished.

## Appendix D

### Research Instrument

#### *Interview guide*

#### 1. Volunteering in Puerto Viejo

- 1) What are the main reasons for your trip to Puerto Viejo? Would you please rank five to ten of your top reasons for your trip to Puerto Viejo?
- 2) Do you consider yourself volunteer tourists? Why or why not? Please explain
- 3) Could you tell me about your volunteering experience in Puerto Viejo (type, length of volunteering, volunteer time you spend per week)?
- 4) Can you tell me why you decided to volunteer during your vacation?
- 5) What do you want to get from your volunteering?
- 6) Could you describe your first and lasting impression on Puerto Viejo?
  - How has your volunteering in Puerto Viejo influenced this impression?
- 7) How has your volunteer experience helped or impeded your getting to know the local culture?
- 8) How has your volunteer experience altered your perception toward Puerto Viejo?
- 9) How would you describe your relationship with general local residents?
  - How would you describe your relationship with the people you volunteered for?
- 10) How do you want to build your relationship with residents during your volunteering?
  - Please explain
- 11) Does your volunteering help you or do not help you feel you are part of Puerto Viejo?
  - Why? Please explain
- 12) What does Puerto Viejo de Talamanca mean to you?

## 2. Interaction

13) Would you please describe the interactions you have with any residents during your volunteering?

- Are they personal or less intimate?
- Where, when, how long do you interact with residents during your volunteering?
- Could you give me an example?

13-1) Would you please describe the interactions you have with the residents you volunteered for during your volunteering?

- Are they personal or less intimate?
- Where, when, how long do you interact with residents during your volunteering?
- Could you give me an example?

14) Do you think that you would have had a different experience in terms of your relationship with all residents if you did not volunteer?

- less number of interactions with locals?, different interaction? In-depth interaction etc?
- Could you give me an example?

14-1) Do you think that you would have had a different experience in terms of your relationship with people you volunteered for if you did not volunteer?

- eg, less number of interactions with locals?, different interaction? In-depth interaction?
- Could you give me an example?

15) Would you please tell me the most memorable experience to you during your stay in Puerto Viejo?

## 3. Commonalities and difference

16) What beliefs do you feel you have in common with all residents in Puerto Viejo?

How could you learn the commonalities?

Do you think your volunteer experience help to find commonalities between you and residents?

16-1) What beliefs do you feel you have in common with residents you volunteered for in Puerto Viejo?

17) Would you please tell me what are the differences between you and all residents in Puerto Viejo?

- In terms of value, behavior, culture?

- How could you learn the differences?

- Do you think your volunteer experience help to find differences between you and residents?

17-1) What are the differences between you and residents you volunteered for in Puerto Viejo?

#### 4. Profile

18) How old are you?

19) What is your highest level of education?

20) Have you been to Costa Rica?

21) Have you volunteered in your country?

If yes, what is the type of volunteering? How long was the volunteering? When was it?

22) Have you volunteered in other country?

If yes, what is the type of volunteering? How long was the volunteering? When was it?

23) What is your current occupation?

24) Do you like to hang out with people or like to stay alone?

5. Trip in Puerto Viejo

25) What brought you to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca?

26) What sorts of activities, behavior, and other things do you and residents do together in the region?

For entertainment, pleasure, enjoyment, volunteering

27) How long have you stayed in Puerto Viejo and Costa Rica so far?

6. Last

28) Is there anything else that you think I need to know or that I have missed during this interview?

**Appendix E****Social Network Sites Permission Form**

Title of Research: Emotional Solidarity between Volunteer Tourists and Local Residents in  
Costa Rica, A Case Study

This study involves the use of your social network sites, such as Facebook, Twitters,blogs. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your name, address of your social network sites) will be mentioned in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. Please indicate what social network site you allow the researcher to access and use materials below.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to access and use material from my social network sites such as (Facebook, Twitter, blog). I also understand that after the completion of this study, the researcher will destroy all tapes and transcriptions.

Please indicate what social networks you allow the researcher to use: Facebook, Twitter, blog

Printed Name:                      Date:

Signature:

**RESEARCHER**

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