

Voluntourism: An Organisation in Search of an Identity

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Abstract

As a result of globalization and increased interconnectivity, it is easier than ever before to travel to different corners of the earth. This phenomenon has also made individuals more aware of the impact that their actions have elsewhere in the world. This global consciousness is causing a shift in the dominant paradigm. Voluntourism is a growing industry that is attempting to bridge the gap between a strictly commercial enterprise, such as travelling, and a more charitable venture, volunteering. These new enterprises are in the midst of transforming a sector in search of an identity and for that reason it is incredibly important to understand who they are, what they do and how they are perceived.

This paper examines the phenomenon of voluntourism with the use of a case study of participants on a six week voluntourism program arranged by the organisation *Operation Groundswell*. It makes use of before and after surveys of participants to assess their ex-ante expectations of the experience and compare them to ex-post assessment of the venture. This case study takes the study of voluntourism a step further by examining through participant observation, the role of the managing organisation outside of simply a facilitator. The influence of the organisation on the expectations and assessments of its participants is highlighted to better understand the new sector identity being created as a result of the emergence of such enterprises.

The results of this study indicate that while an individual may be inspired by one group of motivations more than any other, they evaluate their experience on the basis of elements of all three categories. In order for a voluntourism excursion to be considered a success it must provide the opportunity for altruism, personal/social development and professional development. Additionally, this study's multi-method approach demonstrated the need to contextualise survey information when comparing ex-ante expectation and ex-post assessment in order to account for the influence that events that cannot be captured by a survey have on responses. A final conclusion reached in this paper is that *Operation Groundswell* had a very large impact on its participants' experience. The organisation helped to shape motivations in the provision of reading material prior to the trip departure date and shaped the experience of the trip through daily discussions and meetings in addition to organising accommodation, meals and volunteer activities.

While the results from this study do not have statistical significance because the number of participants studied was too small, they propose a new way of thinking about this new middle between strictly-business corporations and pure charities. Moving forward, it is important to understand the influence that these organisations have in creating a new identity and shifting the dominant paradigm as they continue to gain popularity and notoriety around the world.

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Volunteer tourism is a relatively new phenomenon that has been interpreted in the literature in many different ways. An initial review of current research addresses the definition of key terms and presents key themes related to the topic of volunteer tourism. At one extreme these excursions are viewed as mainly altruistic pursuits while the other are those who consider these trips to be more utilitarian undertakings. It is clear that motivations are an integral part of the research being conducted and yet there is still a lot of work to be done to determine what sort of effects the motivations have on those involved in the activity and the outcome of the activity itself. Correspondingly, the academic literature documents the various underlying motivations of volunteer tourists' participation but to date very little is mentioned about how these motivations are shaped by the actual experience and the organisation managing the trip. The aim of this paper is to further investigate the voluntourism experience in the following ways: firstly this paper identifies and contrasts *ex-ante* expectations with *ex-post* assessment of the experience of voluntourism participants. More concretely, both a before and after survey of participants were administered and used to determine how their expectations of the trip compared with their experience.

Secondly, this paper investigates and tracks the factors that shaped participants' opinions and assessment of their experience over the course of the voluntourism excursion. The use of participant observation will contextualise the events that impacted participants' assessments which occurred over the course of the trip. This type of information can be helpful in understanding the increasing popularity of volunteer tourism opportunities.

Thirdly, this paper will examine the influence of the managing organisation on participants' assessment of their voluntourism activities. The influence of the organisation

Operation Groundswell, the case study of this paper, will be highlighted to further contextualise the shaping of both the participants' expectations and their assessments of the trip.

Finally, this paper will attempt to position voluntourism organisations in the larger economy as the sector searches for an identity in the wake of the recent financial crisis. The dominant paradigm is changing and the lines between a corporate firm and a charity are being blurred, particularly as there is a shift towards firms embracing corporate social responsibility. As the sector transforms, and a new capitalism is born, a new identity is essential.

Overview

In our increasingly globalized world, it is easier than ever before to connect with and travel to the different corners of the earth. As the opportunity to travel has developed over time, so too has the nature of traveling. In recent years, the phenomenon of volunteer tourism has grown and become a progressively more popular activity. Accordingly, the volunteer tourist industry has also grown significantly, particularly over the course of the last two decades. Conducting a simple internet search for international volunteering opportunities will yield several thousands of pages related to "voluntourism" or volunteer tourism. It will connect eager participants to a variety of organizations geared towards facilitating such exchanges. The organizations vary widely in scope, from educational institutions, to employers, to religious organizations. The nature of the volunteer work also differs, ranging from low-skill construction work to providing high-skill medical aid. The level of involvement of the volunteer tourist will depend on both the organization with which they travel, the type of work they will be doing and the duration of the trip.

As volunteer tourism continues to increase in popularity, it becomes more and more important to discuss the motivations to participate and the consequences thereof. Volunteer tourism is a new and growing phenomenon that has garnered the attention of academics across various disciplines (political science, development, psychology, sociology and anthropology to name a few). Due to the multitude of approaches to the topic of “voluntourism” there are many ways in which the concept is defined. The definition of volunteer tourism that will be used in this research is the one that was coined by Wearing and is most commonly used to define the trend: “the generic term ‘volunteer tourism’ applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment.”¹ The participants, or volunteer tourists, are therefore individuals who travel abroad for the main purpose of volunteering in the foreign community. Volunteering in this context means “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization.”²

In order to determine why someone decides to participate in a volunteer tourism program their motivations must be measured and evaluated. A survey of the existing empirical and theoretical literature on volunteering identifies three main motivations for why a person volunteers: résumé- and career-building reasons, altruistic and value-driven reasons and social and ego-defensive reasons.³ The basis upon which individuals are motivated to participate in volunteer tourism programs can greatly impact their experience. Motives to participate are an intrinsic part of an individual’s expectations. Understanding an individual’s intentions and

¹ Stephen Wearing, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a difference*. (Oxon: CABI publishing, 2001), 1

² John Wilson, “Volunteering” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 215

³ Femida Handy et al., “A Cross-Cultural Examination of Student Volunteering: Is it all about résumé building?” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39, 3 (2010): 506

expectations will provide insight as to whether or not a particular volunteer program will be reviewed successfully or not.

The volunteer organization in the case study of this paper is known as *Operation Groundswell* and was established in 2006.⁴ This particular organization advertises its programs as “Backpacking with a Purpose.”⁵ This organization connects “travelers who are socially, environmentally, and politically aware of their impact in the places that they travel to and live in”⁶ with volunteer programs all over the world. This paper concentrates on *Operation Groundswell*’s “Mind and Body” program in which the author participated during summer 2012. This particular volunteer program took place throughout Peru, from May 13th 2012 to June 26th 2012, a total duration of six weeks. Over the course of those six weeks, participants worked with local organizations on sustainable projects in rural communities. In addition to actively participating in the program’s activities, the author administered a “before-and-after” survey of all participants. The purpose of the “before” survey was to determine the motivations which inspired their participation while the “after” survey captured their assessment of their experience paying particular attention to the impact of the volunteer activities on human skills acquisition and development. The goal of this research is to obtain information regarding the motives behind an individual’s decision to participate in a travel-volunteering program and how their opinions change (or remain the same) after having completed the program. This research is part of “a

⁴ “Our Story,” Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/our-story/>

⁵ “Operation Groundswell,” Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/>

⁶ “Backpacktivist Manifesto,” Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

growing body of literature focused on understanding the attitude and behaviour attributes of volunteer tourists.”⁷

In an effort to efficiently and effectively address these issues, this paper is organised into the following sections. The first section examines the terms associated with the concept of voluntourism in a comprehensive review of the literature available on the subject. It briefly summarizes the existing academic literature, focusing in particular on the underlying motivations of its participants and how they influence expectations. The second part provides in depth background information on *Operation Groundswell*, the organisation at the heart of this case study. The purpose of this section is to identify and describe the marketing tools used by the organisation to screen and shape the expectations of the participants of its trips. Of particular note is *Operation Groundswell*'s “Backpacktivist Manifesto” which embodies the organisation's mission. This section also provides a brief account of the “Mind and Body” volunteer program, the specific voluntourism program of study in this paper. The third section discusses the methodology used in this paper, briefly explaining the ethics clearance process, the measurements used such as the before and after surveys, the interviews and the participant observation diary. Additionally, this section describes the sample group in further detail. The fourth section is an analysis and discussion of the results obtained which is followed by a final section which concludes with a brief synthesis of the contributions and policy implications.

⁷ Carla Barbieri, et al “Volunteer tourism: On-the-ground observations from Rwanda,” *Tourism Management* 33 (2012): 509

SECTION ONE: Literature Review

Defining “Voluntourism”

To date, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of the concept “volunteer tourism.” Despite the variance, all definitions argue for the inclusion of components of both tourism and volunteering.⁸ These two components are emphasised in different degrees in each definition, depending on the prospective audience. As a result, participating individuals and organisations respond differently, and react strongly, to the terms voluntourism and voluntourist.” Generally speaking, these terms have adopted a commercial connotation (as a result of overemphasising the “tourism” aspect.) This has prompted the development of additional terms to describe these international volunteering activities. In addition to voluntourism, volunteer tourism has been referred to as “altourism,” ecotourism, backpacker tourism, and volunteer vacation. Each term is tailored to a specific subset of the international volunteer audience. For instance, those individuals and organisations who participate for altruistic reasons, which are typically non-profit, avoid associating with the term voluntourism, choosing instead to promote their activities as “altourism.” The term “altourism” was developed to describe those programs which blur the lines between traditional tourism and international development work – an observable trend dating back to Christian missionaries in the 17th century.⁹ Whereas those individuals and organizations that focus on the environment and sustainable tourism opt to promote their activities under the name ecotourism. The term ecotourism was developed to better describe “an enlightening nature travel experience that

⁸ Kathleen Andereck, “Experience Expectations of Prospective Volunteer Tourists,” *Journal of Travel Research*, 51, 2 (2012): 130

⁹ Benjamin Sichel, “I’ve come to help’ Can tourism and altruism mix?” *Briarpatch Magazine*, November 2, 2006, accessed April 28, 2012, <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/ive-come-to-help-can-tourism-and-altruism-mix/>

contributes to conservation of the ecosystem, while respecting the integrity of host communities.”¹⁰ Not only do these terms, among others, represent subsets of voluntourism but they are also all considered to be forms of alternative tourism.

As previously stated, for the purposes of this study the term volunteer tourism, or voluntourism, is defined as holidays involving activities aimed at improving the quality of life in the local (host) communities. While Wearing’s definition of the term is the most widely accepted, in the wider body of literature on the subject, it is subject to alterations. “Volunteer tourism is a term that has been used to describe a wide range of tourist behaviours and tourism products and services and is now one of the fastest-growing forms of alternative tourism.”¹¹ The industry defines voluntourism as “the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best traditional elements of travel – arts, culture, geography, history and recreation – in that destination.”¹² While the scope of volunteer tourism can be extremely broad, it is most often considered in the context of leisure activities. Participants freely choose to partake in volunteer tourism activities with no monetary gain and no coercion. Additionally, involvement in such activities presents the opportunity to gain many personal benefits. For those reasons voluntouring is considered a form of leisure.¹³

One of the difficulties in defining the term “volunteer tourism” is in defining the two main concepts: volunteering and tourism. The latter is defined as “the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one

¹⁰ Pamela Wight, “Ecotourism: Ethics or Eco-Sell?” *Journal of Travel Research*. 31, 3 (1993): 3

¹¹ K.D Lyons, S. Wearing,, ed. *Journey of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*. (Cambridge: CABI, 2008), 6

¹² “The Voluntourist Newsletter,” Voluntourism, accessed January 12, 2013,
<http://www.voluntourism.org/index.html>

¹³ Andrew W. Bailey, Keith C. Russell, “Predictors of Interpersonal Growth in Volunteer Tourism: A Latent Curve Approach.” *Leisure Sciences*, 32 (2010): 353

consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.”¹⁴ It is considered to be the world’s largest industry, “providing a source of overseas investment, job creation, demand for local goods and services as well as a stimulus for community and regional development.”¹⁵ It is intrinsically tied to travel – the movement of people from one place (region of the world) to a distant or unfamiliar one.¹⁶ Depending on the context, (international, historical, cultural, political, social and religious) volunteering inherits different meanings. By pairing the multi-dimensional concept with tourism, volunteering is contextualised and can be more narrowly defined. At its most basic level, volunteering is the offering of one’s services of one’s own free will without monetary consideration or legal obligation.¹⁷ The complexity of the definition sprouts from the multitude of ‘services’ potentially being offered. Some notable categories of volunteer services include: education, health, physical labour, environmental, community development and emergency/disaster relief. The ‘services’ can then be further defined by the length of time they are offered. Some volunteering commitments are clearly defined and short-term, while others are more ongoing and committed long-term.

Smith and Holmes have gone beyond simply defining the term and have created a model of volunteer tourism activities to help conceptualize the phenomenon. They have done so by bringing together “forms of tourism volunteer (host, guest), the volunteering setting (attraction, destination services, event tourist destination) and the nature of the volunteer contribution

¹⁴ “Collection of Tourism Expenditure Statistics,” World Tourism Organisation, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://pub.unwto.org/WebRoot/Store/Shops/Infoshop/Products/1034/1034-1.pdf> 10

¹⁵ Kathleen Kennedy, D’Arcy Dornan, “An Overview: Tourism Non-governmental Organizations and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 14, 2 (2009): 184

¹⁶ “Definition of Travel,” Merriam-Webster, accessed January 12, 2013 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/travel>

¹⁷ “Definition of Volunteer,” Merriam-Webster, accessed January 12, 2013 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/volunteer?show=0&t=1360398324>

(ongoing, seasonal, episodic).”¹⁸ This model is meant to evaluate the different approaches to volunteer tourism, the purpose of which is to identify any gaps in current knowledge on the topic. Since volunteer tourism is a relatively new phenomenon (dating back roughly a decade) and the research available on the subject is a growing field. There is still much work to be done and models, such as the one put forth by Smith and Holmes, identify areas in the body of research which require improvement. The motive behind developing a model to define volunteer tourism is that to date volunteer tourism has been primarily considered to be simply an alternative to mass tourism. This is mostly the result of the way these trips are marketed by the organizations facilitating the program. Volunteer tourism is also often associated with vacations and holidays as the result of several companies offering voluntouring spring break trips as an alternative to the standard Daytona Beach holiday.¹⁹ The truth however, is that it is a much more complex concept. It has often been treated as a series of isolated components: tourists’ perspectives or locals’ responses, sending nations or receiving communities, expectations or reactions. Seldom does the research make connections across the elements, to communicate more than one side of each story. Almost all of the research is focused on the tourists themselves - the target market of this booming industry. One goal of this stream of research is to better understand the characteristics of good candidates to identify “a productive target market for volunteer tourism offerings.”²⁰ As a result, a significant amount of the research that is focused on the tourist is geared towards determining their motivations to participate.

¹⁸ Karen Smith, Kirsten Holmes, “Researching Volunteers in Tourism: Going Beyond,” *Annals of Leisure Research*, 12, 3-4 (2009): 406

¹⁹ Anne M. Brumbaugh, “The Impact of Diversity Seeking and Volunteer Orientation on Desire for Alternative Spring Break Programs,” *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27 (2010): 474

²⁰ W.W. Wymer, Jr., D.R. Self, C.S. Findley, “Sensation Seekers as a Target Market for Volunteer Tourism,” *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 31 (2010): 348

As the industry grows, attempts are being made to branch out further and study the effects of volunteer tourism activities on the host communities. Unfortunately, since the types and durations of the volunteering projects vary so greatly, it proves to be extremely difficult to assess all of the potential consequences (good and bad). Furthermore, both the short-term and long-term effects of volunteer tourism activities will be determined as much by location as by the individuals involved. For this reason, much of the research is done as case studies and is often difficult to expand to a more general context – volunteer tourism in Bolivia takes a very different form than volunteer tourism in Thailand, for instance. Similarly, the experiences of the tourists will be very different than those of the hosts. There is a creeping sense of “Otherness” in the industry which some blame “on the essentially commercial nature of social exchanges that occur in a tourism context.”²¹ The unequal exchange between the tourists and the residents can be exacerbated depending on the way volunteer tourism is defined – particularly in regards to the duration of the project.

Motivations to Participate

No matter the differences in the way the phenomenon of volunteer tourism is defined, an integral component of each and every definition is identifying the reasons why people choose to participate in the program. In order to determine why someone decides to participate in a volunteer tourism program their motivations must be evaluated. The motivation to participate refers to “the internal, psychological forces that move people to overcome obstacles and become involved in volunteer activity.”²² There are several different factors that can motivate an individual to take part in a volunteer tourism program. The most exhaustive, and widely

²¹ G. Lacey, V. Peel, B. Weiler, “Disseminating the Voice of the Other A Case Study of Philanthropic Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, 99, 2 (2012): 1200

²² E.G. Clary, M. Snyder, A.A. Stukas, “Volunteers’ Motivations: Findings from a National Survey” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25, 4 (1996): 486.

accepted, motivations to participate fall into the following categories: altruism, travel and adventure, personal growth, cultural exchange and learning, professional development, convenience (right time and place), and finally the program in question. Based on a survey of the existing empirical and theoretical literature on volunteering, of these categories, there are three main motivations for why a person volunteers: résumé- and career-building reasons, altruistic and value-driven reasons and social and ego-defensive reasons.²³ Résumé- and career-building reasons are associated with potential advancement in employment or admission to other programs such as higher education facilities. Altruistic and value-driven reasons may refer to religious or other beliefs that it is important to help those less fortunate than oneself. Social and ego-defensive reasons address shared interests, a desire to meet and interact with like-minded people, and to experience new things.

To date there has been significant focus on distinguishing between the altruistic participants and those that see voluntouring as a means to an end (i.e. employment or admission) in order to determine if the motivations to participate impact the work that is completed. Furthermore, participants' reasons for volunteering abroad are studied to compare with their resulting experiences. One of the ways that this can be done is by assessing, not only an individual's motivations to participate but also to consider any expectations they have with respect to the volunteer tourist experience. "Expectations are preconceived or preexperience perceptions of a product's performance or attributes."²⁴ Understanding participants' expectations is extremely important when analysing their reactions to voluntourism activities because a voluntourist's preconceived notions are their frames of reference for evaluating their

²³ Handy, "A Cross-Cultural Examination of Student Volunteering: Is it all about résumé building?" 506.

²⁴ Andereck, "Experience Expectations of Prospective Volunteer Tourists," 130

experience.²⁵ “A travel experience that meets or exceeds tourists’ expectations will be remembered positively”²⁶ and is likely to be evaluated in a positive way, compared to one that fails to meet expectations.

There are many factors which may influence an individual’s motivations and consequently their expectations regarding voluntourism. A multitude of personal and situational variables such as “country-of-origin specific values and attitudes as well as situational variables such as holiday duration, travelling companions and fellow holidaymakers”²⁷ will influence a participant in different ways and to varying degrees. One of the most influential factors, if not the most influential factor, of any voluntourism activity however, is the organisation responsible for managing the excursion. The organisation arranging the voluntourism activities has control over all aspects of the trip from selecting the participants to choosing the destination and volunteer projects. The way the organisation promotes itself will influence which people apply to its programs and what they expect to get out of the experience. Furthermore, the activities the organisation orchestrates while abroad will greatly influence the journey of the participants. It is therefore extremely important that in any assessment of voluntourism activities, the influence of the organisation on its participants is taken into consideration.

SECTION TWO: Operation Groundswell

Operation Groundswell is the organisation that arranged the voluntourism trip in which the author participated and for that reason is the subject of the case study of this paper. Since the aim of this paper is to examine the influence of the voluntourism organisation on participants and

²⁵ Paul Fallon, “Monitoring Visitor Satisfaction with Destinations using Expectations, Importance and Performance Constructs,” in *Tourism Management* ed A.G. Woodside and D. Martin (Cambridge: CABI, 2008), 427

²⁶ Andereck, “Experience Expectations of Prospective Volunteer Tourists,” 130

²⁷ Paul Fallon, “Monitoring Visitor Satisfaction with Destinations,” 427

their assessment of the activity it is important to fully understand the organisation. The following subsections describe the organisation in detail for the purpose of understanding what its mission is and what its goals are with respect to its projects and its participants. This will provide the insight required to assess how and to what degree the organisation's objectives impacted participants' ex-ante expectations and ex-post assessments of the experience.

First Impressions

“Backpacking with a purpose – Our mission is to change the way the world travels.”²⁸ These words are the first impression presented by *Operation Groundswell* on their website's home page. This is an immediate attempt to differentiate itself from the hundreds of other organisations that offer volunteering programs abroad. Their mission statement is coupled with an introductory video describing the reasons why the organisation was founded. The 80 second long video entitled “Our Story,” highlights the differences between *Operation Groundswell* and other travel organisations and it advertises the qualities that make up the organisation's members and programs. The video addresses the organisation's target audience – “students paying tuition and rent, eating too much canned food, buying \$100 course packs we only read a few times, and probably having too many nights out.”²⁹ It appeals to those individuals who are “young, ambitious, and eager to get away from [their] comfortable lives.”³⁰ This targeted group does not have a lot of disposable income, generally speaking, and *Operation Groundswell* cites the lack of affordable opportunities as one of the main drivers leading to the organisation's establishment.³¹ Additionally, these are people who are looking to explore the world in a sustainable and

²⁸ “Operation Groundswell,” Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/>

²⁹ Video, Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/>

³⁰ Video, Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/>

³¹ “Our Story,” Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/our-story/>

authentic way, creating meaningful and genuine experiences while doing so. It explicitly mentions their goal to avoid imposing their own values on the communities in which they run their programs, pointing to their commitment to working in cooperation with their local partners. Finally, further to their mission statement, the video underlines their ambition to spark “a movement of globally active and committed backpackers.”³² This is a very pointed way of influencing the participants of their programs. By advertising itself and promoting its programs in this way, *Operation Groundswell* is effectively screening its applicants. People who have the same values and goals will be persuaded into choosing this organisation over a competitor.

Upon the researcher’s return home from the Peru “Mind and Body” 2012 trip, *Operation Groundswell* made significant changes to its website. It had added a new page entitled “Academic Credit” which outlines ways for *Operation Groundswell* participants to subsidize their trips and get university credit for their time abroad.³³ The addition of this page to their website is indicative of their target audience – university students. They promote the experiences had while on their trips as a form of “alternative education” citing their alumni who claim that it “means more to them in the long-run than a semester’s worth of courses.”³⁴ While *Operation Groundswell* does not guarantee that a post-secondary institution will award credits for the completion of one of their programs it does present several examples of projects which have been credited in the past to entice students to apply. They also confirm that members of the *Operation Groundswell* family are students and recent graduates themselves and so they are sympathetic to the plight of students wanting experience outside of the classroom but do not have a lot of disposable income. This is of particular note because of the way in which it will

³² Video, Operation Groundswell, accessed April 11, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/>

³³ “Academic Credit,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/academic-credit/>

³⁴ “Academic Credit,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/academic-credit/>

influence and promote certain motivations to participate. While *Operation Groundswell* primarily promotes its programs in a way to attract individuals with altruistic reasons, the potential awarding of academic credit will specifically attract those individuals motivated by résumé- and career-building reasons.

They advertise the lowest possible program fee and have committed themselves “to providing a limited number of small financial needs bursaries for those who experience financial barriers.”³⁵ In doing so, they ensure that an applicant will have the opportunity to participate regardless of their economic background or situation. This is listed on their website along with four other factors that sets them apart from other travel volunteer organisations.³⁶ The first factor is their status as a non-profit organisation. While the organisation was established and has been sustained thanks to adherence to business principles, all of the revenue that it generates is re-invested back into the organisation and its projects. On several pages on their website they highlight that they are required by law to think about the best interests of their participants and not the organisation’s bank account. Further to their non-profit status, *Operation Groundswell* is in the process of becoming a registered charity so that it will be able to issue tax-deductible receipts for fundraising donors.³⁷ Fundraising is crucial component of all of its programs with each participant required to raise at least \$1000CDN in order to participate. *Operation Groundswell* is careful to ensure complete transparency with respect to the fundraising they receive. It clearly indicates on its website the way the funds are divided (85% for in-country

³⁵ “Bursary Fund,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/bursaries/>

³⁶ “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

³⁷ “FAQ,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/connect/faq/>

projects, 10% for carbon offsetting and 5% for administration)³⁸ and participants are consulted when determining the allocation of funds once they are in the host country. “Employing a consensus-based decision-making model, each group decides on which projects to fund once in country, whether they be major group projects or smaller personal projects.”³⁹ This is a unique trait of *Operation Groundswell*, while other volunteer tourism organisations may promote the transparency of funding allocation, most do not consult participants while on the ground in the host communities.

The second factor that *Operation Groundswell* claims differentiates their programs from those offered by other volunteer tourism organisations is its commitment to providing “meaningful and genuine experiences”⁴⁰ for participants of its programs. Their trips are designed with the express intent to “uncover the intricacies and on-the ground realities of each region”⁴¹ where the tours operate. Elements of the authentic travel experience that *Operation Groundswell* offers include eating local food, living in local abodes, using local transport and spending “each day as a temporary local.”⁴² *Operation Groundswell* ensures that its trip participants, in the words of one alumnus, “are not getting a censored version of the places you are visiting. You learn, smell, see, and truly feel and experience what it means to be where you are.”⁴³ *Operation Groundswell* promotes its programs as meaningful because it believes, and alumni testimonials confirm, that participation in an *Operation Groundswell* program “will fundamentally change the

³⁸ “Fundraising,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/fundraising-partners/>

³⁹ “Fundraising,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/fundraising-partners/>

⁴⁰ “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

⁴¹ “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

⁴² “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

⁴³ “Testimonials,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://operationgroundswell.com/why-og/testimonials/>

way you see the world. [It] will make you grow in ways you would have never imagined as a person and will challenge your commitment as a global citizen.”⁴⁴

The third factor which sets *Operation Groundswell* apart from other organisations is its attitude towards its partner communities. “Unlike many large Western organisations that create strategic development plans and enforce them throughout the developing world, *Operation Groundswell* seeks partnerships with local NGOs and charities and works with them on community-requested projects.”⁴⁵ It insists that its role in host communities is not as someone with all of the solutions, some sort of knight in shining armour, but instead the role they assume is as a member of the community with a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of society. One of the characteristics of *Operation Groundswell* that facilitates this approach is that in contrast to most other development organisations, it is composed of networks of “curious, hardworking, and socially conscious youth that want to contribute to the beautiful communities that host”⁴⁶ the projects. The projects that volunteers working on behalf of *Operation Groundswell* are all selected by the local NGOs based on the needs of the community. The volunteers are there to facilitate the work being done and to provide the necessary funding. Unlike many other organisations, *Operation Groundswell* does not select the project or impose the project on the host community but instead serves the partner, fulfilling their requests.

The final distinguishing feature of *Operation Groundswell* programs is their environmental consciousness. One of the main components of “voluntourism” is travel, both to and from the host country as well as travel between regions within the host country. The travel

⁴⁴ “FAQ,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/connect/faq/>

⁴⁵ “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

⁴⁶ “We’re different,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/about-us/whywere-different/>

component of any volunteer tourism activity is quite large (consider simply the round-trip flights) and consequently results in a large carbon footprint. *Operation Groundswell* is aware of the very real threat of climate change and the impact that it has on its partner communities. In order to offset the carbon footprint of its programs, *Operation Groundswell* has partnered with PlanetAir, a Canadian organisation that offers “Gold Standard offsets, which adhere to the most widely accepted quality seal for voluntary offsets currently available.”⁴⁷ At the heart of each of these factors, and of the *Operation Groundswell* philosophy in general, is the principle of ethical travel. These features are essential when considering how the organisation influences its participants. An important component of these features is that they are altruistic and value-driven. Their promotion is an attempt to attract participants with the same beliefs – that helping those less fortunate is important and that it is essential to do so in an ethical, respectful and sustainable way. Moreover, the organisation emphasises social reasons to participate, they refer to meeting and interacting with like-minded people with similar interests. These are two of the three main motivations for why a person volunteers. The fact that the organisation is targeting individuals who possess those motivations indicates the potential for a voluntourism organisation to influence participants even before they have begun their voluntourism activities. Furthermore, the highlighting of certain procedures, specifically the division of funds and the consultation with participants for the allocation of funds, creates particular expectations that will have an effect on the assessment of the voluntourism activities, especially if they are not met.

⁴⁷ “Home,” Planetair, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://planetair.ca/>

Generally, the purpose of *Operation Groundswell* programs is to ignite personal growth and global citizenship, paying particular attention to global citizenship.⁴⁸ The organisation defines a global citizen as someone who:

- “is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen;
- respects and values diversity;
- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally;
- is outraged by social injustice;
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global;
- is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place;
- [and] takes responsibility for their actions.”⁴⁹

These are not only the characteristics of global citizens but represent a significant number of the traits that embody a “backpacktivist” – the term representing the community that forms *Operation Groundswell* and its alumni. The organisation not only looks for applicants who possess these traits, but they hope and expect to ingrain them in all of its participants.

The Backpacktivist Manifesto

The participants of *Operation Groundswell* programs form a community of like-minded individuals as a result of their shared experiences. The organisation explicitly states that it wishes to create a culture of “travelers who are socially, environmentally, and politically aware of their

⁴⁸ “Impact Assessment: Part One,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://operationgroundswell.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Impact-Assessment-web-copy.pdf>, 4

⁴⁹ “Impact Assessment: Part One,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://operationgroundswell.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Impact-Assessment-web-copy.pdf>, 4

impact in the places that they travel to and live in,”⁵⁰ travelers dubbed “backpacktivists.” According to the manifesto presented on the organisation’s website, a backpacktivist comprises nine key values. The most important value is the ability to reflect and adapt to change. A backpacktivist “is actively changing who they are and how they interact with the world around them.”⁵¹ As with the undertaking of any endeavour plans are subject to change at any time due to unforeseen circumstances. Due to the nature of the projects and activities that are done in volunteer tourism programs, unforeseen circumstances arise almost daily. These can range from prematurely running out of materials, such as paint, needed to complete a project, to changes in the weather, for instance heavy rain, that would prevent work from being done or would result in work needing to be re-done, such as the painting of lines on an elementary school’s playground. One test of this characteristic that is present on almost every trip is illness. Each location where *Operation Groundswell* runs its programs presents a unique challenge to the volunteers. The work being done in the “Mind and Body” program in Peru for instance occurred at very high altitudes and many participants succumbed to altitude sickness. It was imperative that those participants who were not victims to the altitude be able to adapt and make up for their group members who were not able to work.

A second value, full of life, states that “a backpacktivist squeezes the sweet nectar out of every opportunity the world throws at them.”⁵² This value assumes a certain level of optimism and perseverance to overcome obstacles. It also requires participants to approach each obstacle as a chance to learn and grow. This corresponds with a third value, the thirst for learning. One of

⁵⁰ “Backpacktivist Manifesto,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

⁵¹ “Backpacktivist Manifesto,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

⁵² “Backpacktivist Manifesto,” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

the ways that a backpacktivist takes full advantage of their trip's quest for knowledge it by embodying another two values listed in the manifesto: conscientiousness and humility. "Adhering to local traditions and customs allows us to understand the value of cultures different from our own."⁵³ Furthermore, approaching the tasks with humility helps connect the volunteers "to locals on a different level."⁵⁴ Even though in some instances there may be a barrier to communication, for instance language, *Operation Groundswell* maintains that there is much that can be learned from the experience if participants approach travel with the right attitude.

The remaining four values (respect, solidarity, group-focused and leadership) are all important for the cohesion of the group of volunteers. Volunteer tourism programs involve spending almost all day, every day with the other members of the group, often for an extended period of time. *Operation Groundswell* trips are often composed of strangers at the outset, having participants meeting for orientation only after having arrived in the host country. It is important that even if not everyone likes each other that they are still able to work together to accomplish the intentions of the trip. Moreover, they need to be able to work with the host communities as a group "to develop a deeper understanding of the world,"⁵⁵ to take that understanding to shape a world free from injustice and become "the next generation of positive leaders... ones that teach people how to think for themselves"⁵⁶

Even if a participant does not fully embody each and every value prior to departing on a trip with *Operation Groundswell*, the experience that the trip leaders provide ensures that all of

⁵³ "Backpacktivist Manifesto," Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

⁵⁴ "Backpacktivist Manifesto," Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

⁵⁵ "Backpacktivist Manifesto," Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

⁵⁶ "Backpacktivist Manifesto," Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/the-backpacktivist-manifesto/>

the alumni possess these virtues upon completion of their program. Participants are provided with *Operation Groundswell*'s Ethical Travel Primer a package comprising papers and stories questioning what it means to travel ethically. The 32 page document contains everything from lecture transcripts to newspaper articles and academic papers but the content of all of them revolves around the philosophy of *Operation Groundswell*, and as such present only one side of a multifaceted story. Moreover, these values are consistently referred to over the course of a given program. The volunteers attend meetings, referred to as a "peelut" (pronounced *poula*) – derived from the Hebrew word for group meeting, at the request of the trip leaders, to discuss important events that have occurred during the trip. These meetings also served as forums for discussing individual experiences on the trip and were used by the trip leaders to address *Operation Groundswell* principles and apply them to the situations at hand. While everyone was free to express their opinions in these gatherings, their main purpose was to set time aside while abroad to discuss the issues or subjects that the organisation wanted its participants to be aware of. It was an almost daily opportunity for the trip leaders to promote the identity of the organisation and in a way control what participants got out of the experience. The provision of the Ethical Travel Primer in advance of the trip was another way in which the organisation influenced its volunteers prior to the commencement of the voluntourism activities and the constant meetings and discussion over the course of the trip ensured that the organisation was able to continuously exert its influence and impact all elements of the participants' experience.

Mind and Body Program

While *Operation Groundswell* offers two types of programs to Peru the "Amazon Adventure" and the "Mind and Body" only the latter is considered in this paper. What follows is a brief account of the itinerary of the "Mind and Body" program. The first of the six segments of

the trip was the orientation phase and lasted five days. Participants arrived in Lima, the capital of Peru, where the trip leaders met them at the airport and escorted them to Casa del Mochilero, meaning House of Backpackers, in the Miraflores district. While in Lima the volunteers attended Spanish language classes, to facilitate their integration in society, and toured cultural sites to “understand the complexity of Peru’s tragic colonial history.”⁵⁷ From Lima, the volunteers embarked on a 20-hour bus ride to Cuzco, the capital of the Inca Empire, where the second phase (an introduction to the Sacred Valley) began. During this time, the volunteers were first introduced to life in the sierra. An eco-farm in the remote village of Maska taught the group about “sustainable agricultural methods, ‘cuy⁵⁸-sine’ in the sierra, traditional medicine, and the real story [of] the Incas.”⁵⁹

The third and longest section of the program is the time spent volunteering. The “Mind and Body” program in summer 2012 focused on two community-requested projects. The first one was in coordination with Sembrando Semillas. Located on the outskirts of Cuzco, Sembrando Semillas is “an NGO that serves as both a yoga retreat and alternative education center.”⁶⁰ The project was helping to construct a massive greenhouse on the farm. Each morning began with yoga and meditation as part of the center’s philosophy, followed by the completion of chores around the farm such as cleaning common areas, emptying the dry toilets into the compost, and feeding the animals. The rest of each day was spent digging into the hillside to clear a level area upon which the greenhouse would be built. Each afternoon a couple of the

⁵⁷ “Mind and Body,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 2, 2012,

<http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/where-we-go/summer/peru-mind-and-body/>

⁵⁸ Cuy is the Spanish word for guinea pig, a staple of the Peruvian diet because they are high in protein, low in fat and easily digestible. Hosts informed the group that guinea pigs have been a part of the Peruvian diet for thousands of years because they were the only animals able to survive the massive droughts.

⁵⁹ “Mind and Body,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 2, 2012,

<http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/where-we-go/summer/peru-mind-and-body/>

⁶⁰ “Mind and Body,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 2, 2012,

<http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/where-we-go/summer/peru-mind-and-body/>

volunteers would work with the local children that visited the center. Most days this involved teaching the children games and activities that would get them exercising and aware of the importance of playing. The second project took the volunteers into the countryside, hours from the nearest major city. Up in the “Four Lakes” region, the group worked with Asociación Kallpa Cuzco, “a non-profit organisation that works to facilitate the building of healthy, sustainable communities.”⁶¹ The volunteers lived and worked in the remote lakeside village of Chahuay where the population still speaks the native (pre-Incan) language Quechua. The project here focused on community health and wellness. The majority of the time was spent “helping renovate and reopen an old, dilapidated playground using all local materials.”⁶² Volunteers cut hay in the mountains to create rooftops for the play structures, stripped bark from logs and sanded and painted them to create new structures, and poured new concrete on the basketball/soccer court. In addition to the manual labour, time was spent inside the classrooms with the school children teaching them the value of recess and the skills and benefits that can be gained from physical activity. The time spent in Chahuay was also spent integrating into the local community, visiting the homes of the locals and participating in their customs.

The fourth segment of the trip was a 5 day journey exploring the famous Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. This trek, which involved hiking, biking and zip lining, led to Independent Travel Time (the fifth phase). All trips organised by *Operation Groundswell* include Independent Travel Time (ITT) which provides participants the opportunity to explore the host country or region as they desire. It gives each participant the option to focus on their specific interests and counts for a significant part of the travel aspect of the trip. Just as all *Operation Groundswell* trips offer

⁶¹ “Mind and Body,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 2, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/where-we-go/summer/peru-mind-and-body/>

⁶² “Mind and Body,” Operation Groundswell, accessed January 2, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/where-we-go/summer/peru-mind-and-body/>

ITT, they all end with the same phase – “disorientation.” Participants reconvened in the desert oasis Huacachina outside of Ica for a debriefing prior to returning home. These last few days of the trip were devoted to discussing the trip’s accomplishments, reviewing various aspects of the trip (such as food and accommodation), and holding a final “peelut” outlining potential future projects before heading back to Lima to take participants to the airport for their flights home.

SECTION THREE: Methodology

Research Design

The literature review on volunteer tourism highlighted three major motivations leading to the decisions to participate in volunteering programs abroad: altruism, personal/social and professional development. These motivations influence participants expectations and, as a result, their experiences while volunteering abroad. The experiences of the voluntourists both reflect and are shaped by the mission of their trip’s organisers. It is imperative to analyse the motivations to participate and their effects on experience in order to fully understand the nature and diversity of the volunteer tourism industry. The overarching question for research on motivations to participate is why individuals decide to participate in a volunteer tourism program in the first place. This question is then contextualized by asking how participation in a volunteer tourism program changes an individual’s point of view with respect to their decision to participate and what skills do/can participants gain (or develop) from participating in a volunteer tourism program? These questions not only identify a participant’s motivations but also assist in analysing their experience. In order to identify these motivations a questionnaire was administered to participants of the “Mind and Body” program asking them to state the extent to which indicators of the various motivations led to their decision to participate in the program.

This also provided an opportunity to gauge participants' expectations by asking them what they anticipate they will get out of the experience. This questionnaire was administered at the outset of the program and as the voluntourism activities neared an end participants were asked to fill out a second questionnaire to determine how their actual experience compared to their initial expectations

In addition to the questionnaires, participant observation was an integral component of the research for this paper. The organisations which run these international volunteering programs seek to control what their participants get out of the experience and as a result significantly influence the experience of each of their participants. The influence of an organisation on its participants will vary according to the identity of the organisation. In order to identify how and to what extent the organisation influenced the voluntourists' experience in this case study, participant observation was used to contextualise the events which occurred over the course of the trip. It facilitated the tracking of factors that shaped participants' opinions and reactions to important moments and activities which ultimately impacted their assessments of the experience.

At the outset of this exploratory study, the author established several hypotheses. The first three hypotheses were in regards to the participants and their motivations. The initial hypothesis was that individuals are primarily motivated to participate in volunteer tourism programs for the ability to put the experience and corresponding acquired skills on their CV/résumé. The second was that after participating in a volunteer tourism program, participants would be more motivated by altruism than at the beginning of, or prior to, their involvement in the program. Finally the third hypothesis with respect to the voluntourists was that they will claim to have gained (or developed) skills (such as the ability to work in a team, communication

and language skills, problem-solving ability and the capacity to think quickly) which will assist them in their future endeavours. A second set of hypotheses was established in regards to the volunteer tourism organisation and the volunteer program. The first was that participants whose values are in line with those of the organisation will be more satisfied with their experience in the program than those whose values differed from those of the organisation. The second hypothesis was that the way in which the organisation identifies and promotes itself will influence the participants' assessments of their experience according to their motivations. Participants whose values differed from those of the organisation at the outset of the voluntourism activities will reflect the values of the organisation in their assessments at the end of the trip. Participants whose values matched those of the organisation from the beginning will continue to mirror them at the end.

Data Collection

In accordance with the policies and procedures of the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, Canada, an ethics review was completed and approval (Appendix A) was obtained from the Research Ethics Board before any research involving the voluntourists was undertaken. The researcher was required to follow the process for a minimal risk review and submit the corresponding application. A description of the research project and the methodology, as well as the questionnaires and interview questions, were all provided to the review board. It was also at this time that verbal consent for participation in the project was received from *Operation Groundswell*.

In keeping with the methods used in case studies of volunteer tourists by anthropological tourism academics, a survey was conducted of participants and leaders of *Operation*

Groundswell's "Mind and Body" program in Peru during summer 2012. While the researcher had frequent social encounters with members of the local community the language barrier prevented any real communication. For that reason their experience was not documented and is not included in this study. The "Mind and Body" program ran for approximately six weeks (beginning 13 May 2012 and ending 26 June 2012). During this period the author participated in and observed the group of *Operation Groundswell* volunteers. Extensive notes of the experience were taken detailing the program and the reaction of participants to the various activities included in the itinerary. In addition to participant observation, casual conversations were conducted with participants during the trip. These conversations occurred spontaneously and naturally and were not necessarily initiated by the researcher, but instead were instigated by the trip leaders and the other participants. These informal social interactions are considered by the author to be an intrinsic part of the volunteer tourist experience. It was a form of bonding among participants which help to create and maintain a trusting atmosphere. This trust allowed for participants to freely voice their concerns and opinions. The researcher's findings do not rely solely on these conversations however. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the trip leaders assigned to the group to gain insight into the program and their objectives. These interviews occurred throughout the trip as different activities were undertaken by the group. A more formalised interview was conducted with each trip leader at a specific date and time for clarification and elaboration. The interview questions prepared (Appendix B), discussed the trip leaders' previous experiences volunteering abroad, their decision to work with *Operation Groundswell* and the Peru "Mind and Body" program, as well as their intentions with respect to the experiences of the participating volunteers. The strategy for the interviews was still conversational, beginning with broad questions regarding volunteer tourism followed by more

specific inquiries in the *Operation Groundswell* and their particular volunteer program. The trip leaders were also provided the opportunity to clarify any of their responses to avoid the imposition of unintended meanings or connotations.

The multi-method approach that this study undertook also involved the administration of two questionnaires (Appendix C) to the program participants. All members of the “Mind and Body” trip were informed of the researcher’s purpose to further investigate volunteer tourism and were given the opportunity to refrain from participating in the study. The first of the two questionnaires was conducted at the beginning of the trip (during the first three days of trip, the orientation period) and will be referred to as the *before* survey. The *before* survey asked the participants why they chose the program and what they expected to gain from the experience. The questions were formulated so as to cover, amongst other things, the following categories: i) their perception of human skills acquisition (both for job market and non-job market purposes); ii) their perception of how much “good” they expected to do while in Peru; and iii) their perceptions of the tourism advantages related to this type of program.

When determining the motivations of participants, they were presented with a series of explanations for why they may be participating in the program (each related to one of the three main motivations – altruism, personal/social, and professional development) and asked to rank them according to their relevance. Participants were also asked if they, or someone they know, had already participated in a similar program abroad. Additionally, the usual socio-demographic information (gender, age, household income, and education) was also requested. The second survey, which will be referred to as the *after* survey, was performed at the end of the program (during the last three days of the trip, the “disorientation” period.) The *after* survey asked, amongst other things, what participants thought they had gained from their experience.

Deliberate efforts were made to keep the before and after questions as similar as possible to facilitate comparisons and as a result, many of the same questions were asked simply in the past tense. More concretely, questions in the *after* survey fall into the following categories: i) an assessment of human skills acquired (both for job market and non-job market purposes); ii) their perceptions of how much “good” they had accomplished during their stay; and iii) their evaluation of the tourism advantages of the trip. Open-ended questions were also asked, in order to discover whether the participants had learned or acquired valuable experiences in ways that they had not anticipated. In both surveys participants were asked to include any additional comments or opinions that they felt were relevant and that were not included in the questions asked. The feedback on the motivations of participants was collected from the surveys and imported to SPSS predictive analytics software to be processed for analysis.

Limitations

While every effort was made to collect as much information while participating in the “Mind and Body” program, the research was not without limitations. Firstly, the busy itinerary of the program made the documentation of every aspect of the trip a challenge. Additionally, during the six week program there was designated independent travel time during which the volunteers were able to spend time outside of the group. This time is classified as part of the tourism aspect of the trip as it gives the volunteers the opportunity to travel to places that the trip operators have not included in their itinerary. While the experiences of the researcher were documented during this time, the experiences of the other participants could not have been documented or observed, yet these experiences could have significantly influenced the responses provided on the *after* survey. At the beginning of the “Mind and Body” trip participants were unacquainted and slightly guarded in their conversations and behaviour. While everyone seemed to welcome the

impending new experiences and friendships, interactions were initially stilted and many ice-breaking activities were scheduled in order for participants to familiarize themselves with one another.

Another limitation was that the schedule of events was beyond the control of the researcher since she was a participant of the program, and not an organiser. This meant that the administration of the surveys and the interviews needed to be done around the scheduled program activities. Moreover, they were subject to change when unforeseen circumstances arose and accordingly the research approach needed to be shifted as part of the group's reaction. The most significant limitation of this research is the result of the number and type of volunteers participating in the "Mind and Body" program. *Operation Groundswell* was responsible for selecting the participants so the number of participants in the study is limited by the number of volunteers they selected. Furthermore, *Operation Groundswell* conducts interviews prior to selecting individuals to partake in their trips. The participants of this study are therefore subject to the selection bias of the organisation. Since *Operation Groundswell* promotes its programs' altruistic characteristics it follows that while conducting their interviews they would only select those volunteers with the same opinions and ideals.

A third limitation is the inherent bias in the participant observation. The observations of the researcher are her interpretations of events and are subject to her prejudices. While every effort was made to ensure that an impartial and balanced account was written, the experience of the researcher as a participant is sure to have impacted the narrative in some way. Finally, an unforeseen limitation of this study was that all of the participants were women, the only exception being the one male trip leader, therefore skewing the results towards the experiences of female "voluntourists."

Delimitations

While observing multiple groups of “voluntourists” on various programs and making comparisons may yield valuable results for the industry as a whole, the choice to solely observe the “Mind and Body” trip to Peru allows for a more in-depth understanding of that particular group and organisation. Furthermore, the participant observation allows for greater insight into the volunteer tourist experience from the beginning to the end. Participation in all group activities occurred to ensure an accurate description of the experience. It demonstrated the evolution of the volunteer tourist and their opinions as a result of the experience, instead of analysing them at only one point in time. Additionally, informal interviews were conducted to minimize obtrusiveness on the group and to allow for last minute schedule changes. Since the researcher’s primary aim was participation in the group activities she was perceived and treated as any other volunteer. This permitted more candid discussions and interactions with the other participants which provided a window into the volunteer tourist’s experience that an outside researcher may not have access to.

Despite initially having been interviewed and selected by *Operation Groundswell*, participants in the “Mind and Body” program will weigh the various motivations to participate differently. Additionally, the experience of volunteering abroad will influence individual participants differently – they will each have their own expectations prior to the trip and will take away something unique to them upon returning home from the trip. Furthermore, while *Operation Groundswell* has a process of selection the chances of someone being selected to participate are very high. According to their website, an applicant may not be selected for their first choice if an unusually high number of candidates submit an application for that particular

program.⁶³ Moreover they advertise the interviews as “just a chance for us [*Operation Groundswell*] to get to know you [the applicant] a little better, as well as a chance for you to ask those pressing questions that you weren’t able to find the answers to.”⁶⁴ This indicates that the selection process of the organisation is not as discriminating as initially assumed and the impact of any bias of the organisation is minimal.

Finally, the gender division of the “Mind and Body” program is not without research value itself. It is connected to the type of work being done in that particular volunteer trip and should be granted consideration in any and all findings. According to one of the trip leaders, the *Operation Groundswell* programs typically attract a higher percentage of female participants citing organisational skills and security concerns as potential reasons for this phenomenon. While some of *Operation Groundswell*’s programs in Africa and Southeast Asia have more male participants, the programs run in Peru, particularly the “Mind and Body” program, are consistently made up of more women than men. This gender divide appears to be a characteristic of the program and its significance should be accounted for.

SECTION FOUR: Analysis and Discussion⁶⁵

General Observations

As previously mentioned, all but one of the participants of the “Mind and Body” program were female (the only male volunteer was one of the trip leaders) and all of the participants were enrolled in programs at post-secondary institutions. The case study of this paper therefore supports the “dominant status model” of volunteering which claims that “people with higher

⁶³ “FAQ” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012, <http://operationgroundswell.com/connect/faq/>

⁶⁴ “FAQ” Operation Groundswell, accessed October 4, 2012 <http://operationgroundswell.com/connect/faq/>

⁶⁵ The data is available from the author upon request.

social and economic status tend to volunteer more.”⁶⁶ Voluntourism programs are not only costly but also require a lengthy time commitment which not everyone can afford. Since the program took place over the course of a summer, it is not surprising that the participants were all students as they are typically on holiday during the summer. Almost everyone in the program had taken part in some sort of volunteering activity in the 18 months leading up to the trip to Peru. Yet for the majority of participants the “Mind and Body” program marked the first time they would be volunteering abroad. This is of particular note because while the experience of volunteering domestically will be dramatically different to that of volunteering internationally, many of the expectations and motivations to participate are the same.

At the time of the trip, only one of the participants was in a long term relationship. However in casual conversation several participants admitted to having been in long term relationships but having ended them prior to their departure to Peru. This is an interesting observation as it appears to be reflected in the motivations to participate in the relatively high scoring response “it provides me an escape from my everyday life.” A final general observation was that most participants did not consider other similar organisations when deciding to participate in an *Operation Groundswell* program. This is potentially indicative of shared values and beliefs between participants and the organisation. It may also be the result of *Operation Groundswell*'s intensive targeting and its influence is certain to be reflected in participants' assessments.

⁶⁶ L. Hustinx, R.A. Cnaan, F. Handy, “Navigating Theories of Volunteering: A Hybrid Map for a Complex Phenomenon,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 40, 4 (2010): 422

Expectations vs. Experience

Participants were asked to rank, according to their relevance, a series of explanations for why they may be participating in the program at the beginning of the trip. Of the 21 possible reasons, the majority of the most highly ranked responses were indicative of personal/social motivations to volunteer. The top most frequently selected reasons were “to get a new perspective on things” and “because I like to travel.” Another personal/social motivation that was highly scored by respondents was “to meet new people.” While not any one altruistic reason was selected often enough to make the top three, several altruistic reasons were ranked quite highly. To the researcher’s surprise, the professional development motivations were consistently ranked the lowest despite almost all respondents indicating that they were enrolled in a program that was in some way related to the themes and/or activities of the “Mind and Body” program. The bottom most frequently ranked reason for participating in the program was “to relieve some of the guilt I feel about being more fortunate than others,” followed closely by “it might make me feel better about myself” and “it might help me get paid employment.”

When participants were asked to rank the reasons for which they are happy that they participated in the project at the end of the trip most of the same reasons remained ranked as the highest and lowest. “I like to travel” was still most frequently ranked the top reason for having participated in the project, tied with “I met new people.” These responses were followed closely by “it was a life changing experience” and “it is important to help others.” In keeping with the responses from the *before* questionnaire, the most highly ranked reasons represented personal/social motivations and the lowest ranked reasons were indicative of professional development motivations. However, unlike in the results measuring expectations, the experience led to a significant increase in ranking of altruistic indicators. The bottom most frequently ranked

reasons for which participants were happy that they participated in the program remained the same at the end of the trip as they were at the beginning.

In addition to changes in the top and bottom three reasons for participating and evaluating the success of the trip, there were significant shifts in the extent to which participants agreed with certain statements. In the *before* questionnaire the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement “I am participating in this project because I can talk about it at job interviews.” This indicated that their decision to participate was not strongly inspired by professional development motivations. However, when asked the extent to which being able to talk about the experience at job interviews made them glad that they were a part of the trip, participants responded more agreeably. The same was true for their responses to “the experience may help me get a job.” Respondents indicated that they were not motivated to participate because the experience would help them obtain paid employment yet they gave that reason a higher score of importance for evaluating the success of the trip. This is interesting because even though the participants did not admit to being motivated by professional development reasons, their evaluations made it clear that professional development factors were essential for the trip to be considered a success. Moreover, this indicates that there are expectations or motivations that participants hold that they may not be aware of which have an impact on their assessment of the voluntourism experience. It may also be indicative of the phenomenon of unconscious self-censoring. Since volunteering is so often associated with altruism and selflessness (as opposed to skills acquisition and professional development) respondents may have subconsciously emphasised the social and altruistic reasons and downplayed the professional development reasons when indicating their motivations to participate. This could explain why, despite being

ranked so lowly as a motivation, the professional development reasons were still used to evaluate the experience.

By administering both a before and after questionnaire it is clear that the motivations and expectations of a participant will impact their assessment of the experience. However, the extent to which the motivations and expectations impact the voluntourist's experience cannot be gleaned from the before questionnaire alone. Most of the research on voluntourism focuses solely on the factors leading up to the decision to participate in the program but as this case study shows it is not the complete story. Even though an individual participant may be motivated primarily by one set of motivations, their experience can still be impacted by and assessed on the basis of the other sets of motivations. In future research on the motivations and expectations of voluntourists, further attention should be paid to how they shape the assessments of the experience since the discrepancies in the before and after responses may shed light on motivations and expectations that the participant had not realised they possessed.

Life as a Voluntourist

Over the course of the six week "Mind and Body" program there were many events and parts which impacted the experience of both the individual voluntourist and the group of volunteers. There were also obstacles, such as a language barrier and illness, to overcome which presented a challenge and would influence the experience to various degrees. At the beginning of the program participants attended mandatory Spanish lessons in order to gain the basic skills required for interaction with the local population. While these classes were intensive and extremely beneficial, the majority of the time spent doing the volunteer work was in a very remote village where the inhabitants spoke Quechua, a pre-Inca native language. This meant that

not only was a language barrier still present but it also meant that participants were not able to use the skills that they had learned at the beginning of the program. This was reflected in the questionnaire responses with those individuals motivated to participate to *learn* Spanish indicating satisfaction with that aspect of the program while those individuals motivated to participate to *further develop* their Spanish skills were less satisfied with that part of the program.

Unfortunately the participants of this particular program had to overcome more serious obstacles than a language barrier. Every participant suffered from at least one illness over the course of the trip. For some it was motion sickness during the 20-hour bus ride through the mountains, for others it was altitude sickness upon arriving at the volunteer destination. Still others suffered from colds, suspected food poisoning, severe allergic reactions, and insect bites. Multiple trips to a local doctor needed to be arranged for many of the volunteers while the healthy participants were forced to make up for the absence of their comrades. The presence of so much illness had an immense impact on participant's assessment of their experience. One of the results of the illnesses (or injury in some cases) was the development of a new perspective on things particularly patience, cooperation and group work. Each group member had their own perspectives on hard work, bad food and sickness and had their own way of dealing with each of those things. It was challenging to accommodate everyone but in doing so group members learned new ways of overcoming the situations they found themselves in.

Furthermore, there was a new perspective and appreciation of life at home in the developed world. Participants had to wait over 40 minutes at the side of the road for a car that would take them to the village with the doctor and then once there had to wait over 2 hours just to find out that the doctor was not going to be in the office. These experiences coupled with the

introduction of a new, slower and simpler way of life, provided participants with a new perspective on things that both met and exceeded many of their expectations. That being said, participants who became a voluntourist with the express purpose of getting a new perspective on things did not feel that they had gained a new perspective to the same extent as those participants who were less motivated by that reason.

There were two main volunteering projects that the group worked on while in Peru. The first was the construction of a greenhouse at the Sembrando Semillas yoga and alternative education centre. The second was the reconstruction of a playground in the rural village of Chahuay. The mixed assessments of the group's effectiveness were a result of the very different nature of the projects. The first project was not what many of the volunteers expected. The work being done took place on the Sembrando Semillas farm which was removed from the neighbouring village and was completely fenced in, giving several of the volunteers the feeling that the work that they were doing was not going to impact the wider community. The children of the community were invited to the farm for lunch every day during the week which indicated that they would benefit from the work that was being done but the isolation left a lot of the volunteers with a feeling of disappointment as they had the intention of helping as many people as possible while taking part in the program.

The second project provided the experience that most of the participants had been hoping for and expecting when they signed up for the program. The construction of the playground involved not only the voluntourists but also local volunteers and there was a real sense of community coming together to accomplish the project that would clearly benefit not only the people of Chahuay but children and adults of the neighbouring villages. All of the participants were extremely satisfied with this project and for that reason many of them responded that they

highly agreed with the statement that they had “made a difference” and “helped others.” However, because of the general disappointment with the first project, that in addition to not being the type of work that most participants expected was not completed before the group had to leave for its next commitment, there were also many respondents who slightly disagreed with those statements.

Another element of the voluntourism program which greatly impacted the experience of the participants was the accommodation and provision of amenities. Participants were informed prior to their departure that all accommodation, meals and similar necessities would be provided by the trip leaders for the duration of the program. While the accommodations did require some getting used to for most participants, particularly on the Sembrando Semillas farm which used dry toilets and no way of heating the bedrooms when the temperature dropped well below freezing at night, for the most part they only presented a small challenge to participants. The participants’ diets also underwent significant changes while abroad, mainly because of the effect that the altitude has on the digestive process. While these aspects of the trip required participants to make adjustments, for the most part they were not problematic and would have influenced participants’ experience on an individual basis. A particular bone of contention for many participants however was the lack of provision of necessities such as toilet paper that was the responsibility of the trip leaders. The group was frequently running out of toilet paper at the most inopportune times which caused a lot of frustration for certain group members. The primary concern raised by participants was that they had paid (as part of the program fee) for a service that they felt they were not receiving. If this had occurred only once it may not have been as problematic, however since it happened consistently, participants’ annoyance and irritation built up and was reflected in their evaluation of the experience.

A final component of the trip that would have significant influence on the assessment of the program was the Independent Travel Time (ITT). During ITT, participants were able to go and do whatever they pleased before reuniting with the group and returning home. The experiences had during ITT fall strictly within the tourism side of voluntourism and represent the holiday portion of the program (where the volunteering is considered the work portion). These experiences likely had a large influence on the assessment of the travel component of the program however since this time was spent individually the researcher was not able to ascertain to what extent these experiences impacted participants' responses. Considering this time was spent travelling and all respondents who ranked travel as the top most reason for why the trip was a success took part in ITT, it appears as though there is a strong link between ITT events and positive evaluations of the program.

The insight obtained from the ex-post assessment of the voluntourism experience is extremely valuable, especially when compared to the ex-ante expectations however it is often only one part of the story. By making use of participant observation certain factors contributing to either a positive or negative evaluation can be contextualised. When studying voluntourism it is extremely important to put the results in context because each participant will have a different experience based on where they went, who they went with and the work they did while abroad. Moreover, the context can provide further understanding of why participants' assessments differ from their expectations, or why they remained the same. Additional research of this kind may lead to a better comprehension of the popularity of voluntourism opportunities based on what factors make a voluntourism program successful.

Drinking the Kool-Aid

The most influential factor to shape the participants' expectations and assessments is the organisation responsible for managing the volunteer activities. The case study of *Operation Groundswell's* "Mind and Body" trip to Peru is unique because for the majority of participants this was their first time participating in a voluntourism program and because almost all of these new voluntourists did not consider other similar organisations when planning their participation in a voluntourism program. This means that the influence that *Operation Groundswell* had on the participants was very strong. These individuals were getting introduced to the phenomenon of voluntourism and what it means to be a voluntourist on *Operation Groundswell's* terms. As described in detail previously, the *Operation Groundswell* took great pains to describe their mission to prospective voluntourists or "backpacktivists" to use their expression.

The way that *Operation Groundswell* has marketed and promoted itself, particularly via its website, is their first opportunity to mould the expectations of its potential applicants. The emphasis on affordable costs, potential academic credit, and sustainable and ethical travel specifically target students at post-secondary institutions who enjoying travelling and are interested in a new way to experience travel. Once individuals have been accepted as participants to one of *Operation Groundswell's* programs they receive the Ethical Travel Primer which they are asked to read prior to their departure. This Primer contains articles and stories that present *Operation Groundswell's* view of voluntourism and what it means to travel ethically. The intent is to get participants to start thinking about what it means to take part in their program and in doing so frames the expectations of the participant.

After preparing the participants for the trip, and shaping their expectations of what was to come, the trip leaders had every opportunity to shape and influence what the participants would take away from the experience once they were in the host country. The nature of the trip meant that the participants and the trip leaders spent basically 24 hours a day with each other for the entire six weeks of the program. This provided the trip leaders with unlimited chances to reiterate certain themes or concepts that formed part of the mission of *Operation Groundswell*. In addition to casual conversations with participants, the trip leaders organised peeluts on almost a daily basis which they used to put the principles of *Operation Groundswell* in the context of the day's events. These gatherings were generally informative but more specifically they were promotional. Since the majority of participants had never taken part in a voluntourism activity before these meetings were especially influential as they controlled what participants got out of the official exchanges between participant and trip leader.

Discussions of individual experiences were often brought up during the peeluts and participants were encouraged to share their opinions and feelings. Often what would happen is if someone had a concern that they would voice it during the peelut and the trip leaders would have a response or suggest a new approach to the issue that would reflect the beliefs of *Operation Groundswell* and impact what the participant took away from that event and the voluntourism experience. It is not surprising that the emphasis that *Operation Groundswell* and the trip leaders placed on certain motivations and aspects of the trip was reflected in the participants' assessments. Discussions of potentially obtaining academic credit for the trip which occurred over the course of the program were reflected in the increased scores for the professional development statements on the *after* questionnaire. The Ethical Travel Primer and the peelut

discussions also stressed the social and altruistic motivations which was similarly reflected in the *after* questionnaire responses.

The mission of the managing organisation will significantly influence the experience of the voluntourists if for no other reason than they are responsible for arranging all aspects of the itinerary. In the case of *Operation Groundswell* the influence went above and beyond the selection of the volunteer projects, accommodation and meals to include in depth discussions of what it means to travel ethically, of what sustainable development entails and what characteristics make up a voluntourist or “backpacktivist”. For this reason it is important to consider the role of the organisation not only in managing the expectations of participants but also in impacting and shaping participants’ experience.

Summary and Value Added

Participants of the “Mind and Body” trip organized by *Operation Groundswell* were primarily motivated by altruistic and personal/social reasons. The main motivation for many participants was the opportunity to travel which suggests that the tourism element of voluntourism is the most attractive aspect. Unexpectedly, participants were not largely motivated by professional development reasons. Despite this fact, the trip was evaluated as a success only when it offered professional development opportunities. This insight could only be obtained through the before and after surveys. It demonstrates that only a comparison between ex-ante expectations and ex-post assessment can identify all motivations of a participant. This type of study sheds light on motivations that a participant may not be aware of or that they may be self-censoring. It indicates that a participant may assess their experience based on a set of motivations other than the ones which impacted their decision to participate. The administering of two

surveys provides a complete picture of the motivations and expectations of a participant for the researcher, something not previously attempted, and serves as a standard upon which future research should be based. Furthermore, these results suggest that an individual participant is inspired by all three categories of motivations (altruistic, personal/social and professional development) to varying degrees. Most of the current research on motivations places participants into one of the three distinct categories. This study indicates that while a participant may be motivated by one category more than another, all three groups of motivations impact their experience. This suggests that in order for a voluntourism excursion to be considered a success it needs to positively reflect aspects of each type of motivation.

Participation in all activities and aspects of the trip permitted the researcher to empathise with the voluntourists and garner a better understanding of the voluntourist experience. Additionally, it provided the context for the expectations and the evaluations of the trip obtained in the surveys. This insight enabled the researcher to gauge the extent to which an event or activity impacted participant experience. Certain circumstances arose which negatively impacted the experience of all participants, regardless of their motivations or expectations. Over the course of the “Mind and Body” trip these circumstances included illness and lack of supplies. These unforeseen occurrences had a large impact on the participants’ assessments of the trip yet could only be accounted for through participant observation. This shows that a multi-method approach is necessary in order to truly capture the voluntourist experience. A multidimensional subject such as voluntourism requires this type of approach in order to be fully understood. The participant observation also allowed the researcher to study the impact of the organisation on the participant. As far as the researcher can tell, this is the first effort to consider the role of the organisation in the participants’ formation of expectations and evaluations of experience.

Operation Groundswell had a very large impact on the experience of its voluntourists before, during and after the trip itself. By providing information and articles to participants before their departure (through their website and Ethical Travel Primer) the organisation helped form participants' expectations. During the trip the organisation was able to influence the voluntourist experience through the "peeluts" and other interactions between the participants and the leaders in addition to the coordination of accommodation, meals and volunteer and tourism activities. *Operation Groundswell* helped to shape the experience which influenced what each participant took away from trip. This is extremely important to better understand the emerging market of voluntourism. Capturing the impact of the organisation on participants helps to identify the goals or missions that are most important to the organisation and to the activity. This creates a better understanding not only of the voluntourist experience but also of the new industry of voluntourism.

SECTION FIVE: Conclusion

The standard tourist experience begins with an individual forfeiting a payment to an organisation, typically a travel agency, with the expectation that they will be supplied with a tourism experience. This experience is generally framed in a purely utilitarian way (the provision of security, food, comfort) and is assessed on its quality. The primary concern for participants is how they will benefit from the program and what they seek to gain from the experience. Contrarily, the most important aspect of the volunteer experience is to provide a service to a target community. The function of a non-governmental organisation is rarely affected by utilitarian goals. Their missions are purely, or primarily, altruistic and pursue wider social aims. NGOs are typically non-profit associations whereas tourism organisations are often profit-maximizing institutions. Volunteer tourism organisations have located themselves between these

two extremes and how it creates their identity will invariably shape the expectations and the experience assessments of the participants. This paper investigates the formulation of this identity between corporations and NGOs by highlighting the ambiguity reflected in a voluntourism organisation, *Operation Groundswell*, and in the attitudes of its program's participants. As the case study showed, at times the participants of the trip behaved as though they were tourists accessing services which they had paid an organisation to deliver (accommodation, toilet paper). At other times however, the participants behaved as genuine charity actors, promoting sustainable development in the host communities. Throughout the program it was clear that the organisation was trying to influence participants' experience (via information packages, peeluts, and the debriefing session) to ensure the establishment of a particular identity. These emerging enterprises attempt to bridge the gap between commercial and charitable ventures.

The effort to marry these two sectors is a result of globalisation and increased interconnectedness which have made individuals more aware of the impact that their actions at home have around the world. There has been a shift in business practices towards firms taking responsibility for their actions and the dominant paradigm is undergoing changes.⁶⁷ On one hand are businesses embracing corporate social responsibility, taking part in charitable activities and on the other, is the marketization of the charity sector where non-profit organisations, such as *Operation Groundswell*, use business principles to maintain a sustainable enterprise. There is an emergence of social entrepreneurs, individuals who "act as the change agents for society, seizing opportunities others miss in order to improve systems, invent and disseminate new approaches

⁶⁷ Jouni Korhonen, "The Dominant Economics Paradigm and Corporate Social Responsibility," *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 9, 1 (2002): 68

and advance sustainable solutions that create social value.”⁶⁸ As the sector transforms and is in search of an identity it is important to take stock of these new emerging actors. Voluntourism has been steadily increasing in popularity over the past decade and all the signs point to its continued growth. It is extremely important that as the voluntourism industry grows in the space between a corporation and a charity, the new identity reflects this transition and the paradigm shift.

While this case study follows the current format of the academic literature by first documenting the motivations for why a participant chooses to take part in a voluntourism program it offers new insight into the experience and into the identity of the sector. The opinions and feelings of participants prior to engaging in the voluntourism activities were contrasted with their evaluation of the experience to determine not only what they believed voluntourism to be but also what they came to know it as. Using a combination of before and after questionnaires, interviews and participant observation the researcher was able to create a more complete narrative of the voluntourism experience.

This paper paid particular attention of the role of the organisation above and beyond service provider to gauge its impact on the voluntourists. As far as the author is aware, this kind of study has not yet been done. As research continues on the subject of voluntourism, the role of the organisation will provide the necessary insight to explain the role of the organisation in the context of a sector that is searching for an identity. As the dominant paradigm changes in the wake of the recent crisis, the line between a corporation and a charity is blurred. There is no question that the sector is trying to redefine itself and understanding how voluntourism organisations try to influence the opinions of its participants may help discover the new identity for the sector.

⁶⁸ “What is social entrepreneurship?” PBS, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/whatis/>

The case study of *Operation Groundswell* provides valuable insight into a voluntourism organisation's attempts to locate itself on the spectrum between pure charity and pure tourist organisation however the results are simply a census of the participants in the "Mind and Body" project organised by *Operation Groundswell*. There is no statistical significance because of the small number of participants in this particular project and the results cannot be extrapolated and generalised without first being contrasted with other similar projects. Continued research should be undertaken to shed more light on this subject and help define the identity of a sector in the midst of considerable soul-searching.

APPENDIX A: Ethics Approval

File Number: 03-12-03



Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/14/2012

Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Catherine	Liston-Heyes	Social Sciences / Others	Principal Investigator
Carol	Daley	Social Sciences / Others	Student Researcher

File Number: 03-12-03

Type of Project: Professor

Title: Strategic Volunteering

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
05/14/2012	05/13/2013	I

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

PARTIAL APPROVAL

This approval is only valid for Phase I of the study (interviews with volunteers and trip organizers of the Operation Groundswell's volunteer mission to Peru).

Phase II (interviews with employers) will be approved once response to feedback and modified documents have been received.



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at:
http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:
http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5841 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Riana Marcotte".

Riana Marcotte
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

Questions for OG Trip Leaders

- 1a. When did you first hear about Operation Groundswell?
- 1b. How did you first hear about them?
2. What made you decide to join their organisation?
- 3a. How long have you been a part of the organisation?
- 3b. How many trips have you been a part of during that time?
4. If you were able to choose, what made you decide to be a part of the Peru trip?
- 5a. What is your favourite part of being a trip leader?
- 5b. What has been your biggest challenge as a trip leader?
6. What do you feel you have learned from being a trip leader?
7. What do you hope to accomplish as a trip leader vis-a-vis the participating volunteers? (For example, help them experience a new culture, raise awareness for them, awaken certain feelings within them, instill camaraderie amongst them etc)
8. Prior to your involvement with Operation Groundswell what type of experiences abroad had you had? (For instance, other volunteering, academic exchange, travel etc)
9. Before your involvement with Operation Groundswell were you a part of any domestic volunteering organisations?
- 10a. Would you recommend volunteering abroad?
- 10b. If so, why?
11. In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good candidate for a volunteering trip?
- 12a. In your opinion, what is the most important thing that a volunteer can offer such a volunteer trip?
- 12b. In your opinion, what is the most important thing that a volunteer can take away from such an experience?

APPENDIX C: Questionnaires

Before Questionnaire for OG Trip Participants

Section 1:

Q1a) Have you participated in any volunteer activities in the past 18 months? Yes / No

If so please describe the nature of these engagements.

Q1aa) Cause(s): _____

Q1ab) Frequency and approximate hours volunteered: _____

Q1ac) Were these activities required as part of a degree or qualifications? Yes / No

Q1b) Have you volunteered abroad before? Yes / No

If so please describe the nature of these engagements.

Q1ba) Cause(s): _____

Q1bb) Countries visited: _____

Q1c) Has anyone close to you volunteered abroad before? Yes / No

Q1ca) If so, did this influence your decision to participate in such trips? Yes / No

Q1cb) What is your relationship to this person: Friend / Family / Co-worker / Other

If other please describe: _____

Q1d) Have you participated in an exchange programme before? Yes / No

Q1da) If so, where did you go: _____

Q1db) Who organised the exchange (e.g. high school, university, church, sports club, other?):

Q1e) Please describe the 3 most important factors that made you choose Operation Groundswell as your 'experience provider'? _____

Q1f) Did you consider other similar organisations? Yes / No

Q1g) Had you not opted to participate in this trip, how would you be most likely be spending your time during the 6 weeks period? Please select the two most likely options.

Study / Work FT / Work PT / Travel / Volunteer Domestically / Other

If other please describe: _____

Section 2:

Q2aa) What is your current occupation?

Student / Full-time work / Part-time work / Taking a career break / Other

If other please describe: _____

Q2ab) If you are currently a student, what program are you completing?

Q2ac) What is the *last* diploma/degree you obtained (e.g. High School, University, Technical College, other...) _____

Q2e) Are you currently in a long term relationship? Yes / No / Choose not to respond

Q2f) What trade/profession did your parents/guardians pursue?

Parents: 1) _____; 2) _____
 Legal Guardians: 1) _____; 2) _____

Section 3:

Q3a) State the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by placing an X on the line immediately to the right of the question:

I am participating in this project because...	1=DISAGREE	5=AGREE
I wanted to meet new people.	1-----	5
Operations Groundswell provides a really good package.	1-----	5
I can talk about it at job interviews.	1-----	5
I will learn and/or practice my Spanish.	1-----	5
I will be proud to tell others about the experience.	1-----	5
I know people who have benefitted from the type of help we are providing here.	1-----	5
I will learn valuable leadership skills.	1-----	5
I wanted to visit South America with others in my age group.	1-----	5
I want to get a new perspective on things.	1-----	5
It might make me feel better about myself.	1-----	5
Everyone seems to have volunteering experience.	1-----	5
It will relieve some of the guilt I feel about being more fortunate than others.	1-----	5
I like to travel.	1-----	5
These experiences have long-run benefits.	1-----	5
Operations Groundswell provides a secure trip.	1-----	5
I could not afford to spend 6 weeks in Peru otherwise.	1-----	5
It might help me paid employment.	1-----	5
I want to make a difference.	1-----	5
I will learn how to work in a team.	1-----	5
I think it is important to help others.	1-----	5
It provides me an escape from my everyday life.	1-----	5

Q3b) Are there other reasons you feel should belong to this list that we have left out? If so, please list them here:

Q3c) Using the items listed in Q3a and Q3b, please indicate your top three reasons and the three least important reasons for participating in this trip:

Top Three:	Least Three:
1 st	1 st
2 nd	2 nd
3 rd	3 rd

After Questionnaire for OG Trip Participants

Section 1:

Q1a) Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by placing an X on the line immediately to the right of the question:

I am happy I participated in this project because...	1=DISAGREE	5=AGREE
I met new people.	1-----5	
The package Operation Groundswell provided was really good.	1-----5	
I can talk about my experiences at job interviews.	1-----5	
I learned and/or practiced my Spanish.	1-----5	
I have good stories to tell friends and family.	1-----5	
I got to know the local people we worked with.	1-----5	
I learned some valuable leadership skills.	1-----5	
I got to visit South America with people my own age.	1-----5	
I got a new perspective on things.	1-----5	
It made me feel better about myself.	1-----5	
I now have volunteering experience.	1-----5	
It relieved some of the guilt I feel about being more fortunate than others.	1-----5	
I like to travel.	1-----5	
It was a life changing experience.	1-----5	
Operation Groundswell made me feel safe and secure throughout the trip.	1-----5	
I could not have afforded to spend 6 weeks in Peru otherwise.	1-----5	
The experience may help me get a job.	1-----5	
I made a difference.	1-----5	
I learned how to work effectively in a team.	1-----5	
It is important to help others.	1-----5	
It provided me with a good escape from my everyday life.	1-----5	

Q1b) Are there potential elements of the trip you feel should belong to this list that we have left out? If so, please list them here:

Q1c) Out of the elements listed in Q1a and Q1b, please indicate the top three factors that made you glad you were part of this trip and the three least important or irrelevant factors in terms of evaluating the success of your trip:

Top Three:	Least Three:
1 st	1 st

2 nd	2 nd
3 rd	3 rd

Section 2:

Q2a) What was your most memorable moment on this trip and why?

Q2b) What was your most challenging moment on this trip and why?

Q2c) How have you (or some dimension of you - e.g. skills, perceptions, attitudes, political views, resolutions, ambitions) changed (positively or negatively) as a result of taking this trip. Please be as precise as you can in providing your answer.

Q2d) Thinking back to your answers from the beginning of the trip, have any of your responses or reactions changed or surprised you in any way? Again, please be as precise as you can in providing your answer.

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