2013

“It's the need that brings me back”: Ageing Bodies and Volunteer Tourism

Ryan Frazer
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Recommended Citation
Frazer, Ryan, “It's the need that brings me back”: Ageing Bodies and Volunteer Tourism, Bachelor of Science (Honours), School of Earth & Environmental Science, University of Wollongong, 2013.

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“It’s the need that brings me back”: Ageing Bodies and Volunteer Tourism

Abstract
This thesis explores voluntourism by following a group of older (aged 60 years and over) Illawarra Rotarians who travel to the socio-economically disadvantaged village of Nayonbago, Philippines, to build a house. Drawing on post-structuralist feminist epistemology—which emphasises the sensuous and performative aspects of the voluntourist encounter—the thesis aims to better understand older people's participation in voluntourism. Guiding questions are: How do older voluntourists navigate the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism? And what are the implications of their spontaneous encounters with socio-economic disadvantage? Employing a non-prescriptive methodology, the thesis draws on the analytic tools of narrative ethnography. The results presented across three chapters offer new insights into the embodied geographical knowledges of older voluntourists' experiences. The results chapters chart how participants both reproduce and rupture normative sets of voluntourism ideas and identities. The materialities of aged bodies became an interesting entry point into the lived, sensuous experiences of older volunteers – an avenue not previously explored in voluntourism literature. The aged bodies of participants encouraged reflexivity of their ambiguous positioning between being both ‘helpers’ and ‘needy’ in Nayonbago. Similarly, participants' sensuous encounters with the affective qualities of water through ‘play’ fostered mutual feelings of joy between bodies, creating affective bridges across social difference. The aged bodies of participants also helped reconcile the felt differences between outside and inside of their hotel as ‘Western’ and comfortable. Through encounters with hotel air, water, food, and upholstery, participants were not only able to feel the material threshold of the hotel but also resolve the ethical dilemma of the monetary cost of staying there through understanding it as constituting a ‘restorative’ space. The thesis closes by emphasising the importance of future research on older voluntourists in the context of an ageing Australia.

Degree Type
Thesis

Degree Name
Bachelor of Science (Honours)

Department
School of Earth & Environmental Science

Advisor(s)
Gordon Waitt

Keywords
Volunteer tourism, voluntourism, sensuous geography, older people

This thesis is available at Research Online: https://ro.uow.edu.au/thsci/55
“It’s the need that brings me back”: 
Ageing Bodies and Volunteer Tourism

Ryan Frazer

A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Honours degree 
of Bachelor of Science in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, 
University of Wollongong, 2013.
The information in this thesis is entirely the result of investigations conducted by the author, unless otherwise acknowledged, and has not been submitted in part, or otherwise, for any other degree or qualification.

Signed: .............................. Date: ....../...../ .......


Abstract

This thesis explores voluntourism by following a group of older (aged 60 years and over) Illawarra Rotarians who travel to the socio-economically disadvantaged village of Nayonbago, Philippines, to build a house. Drawing on post-structuralist feminist epistemology—which emphasises the sensuous and performative aspects of the voluntourist encounter—the thesis aims to better understand older people’s participation in voluntourism. Guiding questions are: How do older voluntourists navigate the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism? And what are the implications of their spontaneous encounters with socio-economic disadvantage? Employing a non-prescriptive methodology, the thesis draws on the analytic tools of narrative ethnography. The results presented across three chapters offer new insights into the embodied geographical knowledges of older voluntourists’ experiences. The results chapters chart how participants both reproduce and rupture normative sets of voluntourism ideas and identities. The materialities of aged bodies became an interesting entry point into the lived, sensuous experiences of older volunteers—an avenue not previously explored in voluntourism literature. The aged bodies of participants encouraged reflexivity of their ambiguous positioning between being both ‘helpers’ and ‘needy’ in Nayonbago. Similarly, participants’ sensuous encounters with the affective qualities of water through ‘play’ fostered mutual feelings of joy between bodies, creating affective bridges across social difference. The aged bodies of participants also helped reconcile the felt differences between outside and inside of their hotel as ‘Western’ and comfortable. Through encounters with hotel air, water, food, and upholstery, participants were not only able to feel the material threshold of the hotel but also resolve the ethical dilemma of the monetary cost of staying there through understanding it as constituting a ‘restorative’ space. The thesis closes by emphasising the importance of future research on older voluntourists in the context of an ageing Australia.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the ongoing support of an amazing team of friends and family.

First, my supervising professor, Gordon, for his seemingly tireless efforts in helping me maintain focus and enthusiasm in the project over the year. I could not possibly imagine having a better, more dedicated supervisor.

Second, to my Thrillhausmates (Niquelous, Jeffree, and James Franco) for providing an equal-parts work-inspiring, supportive, and adequately distracting environment. I promise I will now have time for hausmate photos. Third, to the Rush 2 crew/cult for support in the forms of camaraderie, funds, and delicious, life-sustaining caffeine. To We’re Wolf, for allowing me to be absent for heaps of band practices and still wanting me to be in the band (I’m still in the band, right?). A special thanks to those who lent me their spare rooms and floors while I was homeless at the start of the year: Jerod & Sarah, Mum & Mark, and Hodgo & Ali. Of course, to all of my unfailingly loving and encouraging family. You literally made me who I am.

And Tommy K, who will always be a legend.
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An Introduction to Voluntourism

I had hoped to be changed by encounters with poverty. I wanted the profound. I wanted to be the girl at a dinner party who the hostess points to and says: “and she worked in Africa.” (de Bruyne 2013 – Huffington Post)

The developing world has become a playground for the redemption of privileged souls looking to atone for global injustices by escaping the vacuity of modernity and globalisation. (Mohamud 2013 – The Guardian)

Volunteer tourism—or its pop moniker, ‘voluntourism’1—has become embroiled in a hotly debated public discussion over the last few years. Highly emotive, alarmist, and rhetorical headlines are now relatively common across some of the Western world’s most widely read news and cultural sources, such as: ‘Voluntourism: A Misguided Industry’ (Rosas 2012 – Al Jazeera), ‘The Tragic Rise of Gap Year Voluntourism’ (Deo 2013 – The Independent), ‘You’re Better Off Backpacking: The Perils of Voluntourism’ (Ward 2007 – The Guardian), ‘Beware the Voluntourists Doing Good’ (Mohamud 2013 – The Guardian), and, more ironically, ‘Voluntourism: We Have to Stop Making This About Your Niece’ (de Bruyne 2013 – Huffington Post). These articles level a high dose of cynicism towards this burgeoning form of ‘alternative tourism’, which ostensibly provides the ideal combination of conventional, hedonistic adventuring while also allowing the tourist to fulfil the altruistic desire to ‘do good’ in socio-economically disadvantaged nations. Scaling upwards and outwards, voluntourism is sometimes conceptualised as “tourism with a development

1 Although the term ‘volunteer tourism’ is featured most prominently in academic work, the more culturally popular ‘voluntourism’ will be used in the current paper.
agenda” (Vodopivec & Jaffe 2011: 111), being linked to global sustainable development agendas.

This debate largely centres on the (un)ethical status of voluntourism – and, as the above headlines attest, the public consensus seems rather bleak. Several key ethical themes are evident across the discussion. First, journalists have pointed out the perhaps glaring economic irony of many voluntourist programs. That is, voluntourist programs often attract significant fees for short-term, arguably superficial projects. As Lucy Ward from The Guardian reported:

"Teaching in a socially and economically disadvantaged area of Rio de Janeiro – minutes from the glorious beach, but a million miles from luxury – is eye-opening and surprising," offers one company, which also charges £1,382 for the chance to participate in a two-week "African savannah project" in Swaziland. (Ward 2007)

The argument being that the voluntourist’s desire to “combine do-gooding with a rattling good time has […] been hijacked and turned to profit by travel agents” (Deo 2013). Further, the economic irony of voluntourism implies that motivations for volunteering are not as altruistic as, apparently, we are meant to assume. As the opening excerpts suggest, voluntourism is often understood as entangled in self-serving searches for egoistic validation, social capital, and romantic escapism. As a result, many journalists have treated voluntourists with cynical contempt. One particularly sardonic article, for example, painted voluntourists as only being interested in “[Facebook] cover photos with poor black kids,” volunteering for “Like a week, just on the side, to do the spiritual enlightenment thing” (Amin 2013).

More alarmingly, some journalists have suggested that, “if attitudes to voluntary work in the developing world do not change” (Ward 2007), voluntourists risk becoming the ‘new colonialists’, “perpetuat[ing] the myth of white man’s burden” (Deo 2013), or the “‘white man coming to save us’ dependency” (Elliot 2013). These journalists often point out that many voluntourism operators have little to
no application criteria – meaning unskilled, unprepared, and inexperienced voluntourists are often placed in roles ranging from building homes and other infrastructure to taking care of orphaned children. With no selection criteria, it has been argued that inept and culturally oblivious voluntourists can leave long-term psychological, physiological, and societal damage on the world’s most disadvantaged.

Although vocal, this debate has focused almost exclusively on one very specific brand of voluntourism: that is, highly commercialised voluntourism products that target the ‘recent high school graduate’, ‘gap year’, and ‘university undergraduate’ demographic. Much less discussed are projects by non-governmental organisations, pro-bono professional organisations, government-funded organisations, and older voluntourists. Further, non-humanitarian projects, such as environmental conservation programs, have also been largely absent. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, this public discussion is closely paralleled in academic literature. Academic attention has arguably been disproportionately focussed on younger voluntourists and the commercial products targeted at them. As such, older volunteers and non-commercial programs have been largely sidelined in both academic and pop discussions of voluntourism, leaving a significant gap in the literature.

1.1 Aims of the Thesis

In light of this, the focus of the thesis falls squarely within this identified gap. Within the broader context of neoliberalism and humanitarianism, the overarching aim of this project is to better understand the tourism experiences of older voluntourists working in a project operated by a not-for-profit organisation. Three primary research questions guide the project:

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2 Generally, a ‘gap year’ is a year taken off between graduating high school and beginning university or full-time work. ‘Gappers’ often use this time to go travelling, and the practice has become increasingly common in Western nations over recent decades (see Lyons et al. 2012).
1. How do older volunteers negotiate the encounters within the sites staged for their voluntary labour?

2. What are the implications of older voluntourists’ spontaneous encounters with socio-economic disadvantage?

3. And how do older volunteers negotiate the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism?

These questions are purposefully broad to allow themes to emerge from the project. As background, the voluntourist project that is the case study for the research will now be outlined.

1.2 Background to the Philippines Project

The voluntourism project of interest is organised and executed by the Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club—located approximately an hour’s drive south of Sydney—and is comprised of an annual trip to Bacolod City, Philippines. Before going into the specifics of this project, however, I will first say a few words about the relationship between Rotary International and the Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club (ISRC).

1.2.1 Rotary International and the Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club

Rotary International, formed in 1905, is one of the world’s oldest service organisations. Originally developed as “a place where professionals with diverse backgrounds could exchange ideas and form meaningful, lifelong friendships” (Rotary International 2013), Rotary’s 1.2 million members in 34,000 local clubs across 200 countries are now “working together from around the globe both digitally and in-person to solve some of our world’s most challenging problems” (Rotary International 2013). This work is guided by the Rotary ethic of “service above self,” which promotes active involvement in both local and global development agendas.
The Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club (ISRC) is located in Wollongong, Australia. Officially ‘chartered’ in 1993, the ISRC “is a mixed club of around 41 active and younger members” (Wollongong Smith’s Hill Fort 2010). The ISRC is particularly interested in community programs involving local youth services and fundraising for local charities. Although this suggests the inclusion of ‘younger’ Rotarians, this must be put into context of the broader Rotarian demographic, which has a global average age of 61 (Sorjus 2012)

1.2.2 The ISRC Philippines Project

The ISRC project in the Philippines has run annually since 2005, and has a relatively complex history and composition. Originally developed by members of Wollongong Church of Christ—in partnership with Habitat for Humanity4, Bacolod City—the project was officially taken over by ISRC in 2009. As such, and importantly, the project is run entirely by non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, which distinguishes it from the focus of most academic work on voluntourism.

Since conception, the project has focused on a small, highly socio-economically disadvantaged village named Nayonbago5, which sits on the outskirts of Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines (see Figure 1.1 below). Part of a rapidly expanding and ‘modernising’ city, Nayonbago was founded in 2002. Prior to this,

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3 All local Rotary Clubs must conform to relatively strict Rotary International governance and standards. Only once this has been officially confirmed will a new local clubs be ‘chartered’ by Rotary International.

4 Habitat for Humanity is an international NGO that “rehabilitates and repairs simple, decent, affordable homes in sustainable communities with support from homeowner families, volunteers, donors and partner organizations in more than 20 countries across the Asia-Pacific region” (Habitat for Humanity 2013). Further, while it is an explicitly Christian organisation, Habitat for Humanity does not actively proselytise.

5 For ethical reasons, the name of the village has been changed to a pseudonym, Nayonbago, which translates (very roughly) to ‘New Village’ from Tagalog – the national language of the Philippines. Further, all information on Nayonbago reproduced here must be taken as somewhat tentative. As no official documentation of Nayonbago exists (or, rather, can be sourced), the information has largely been gathered from ISRC documents and in field observations.
the now-residents of Nayonbago lived on a parcel of land closer to Bacolod City CBD. Considered ‘squatters’ by Bacolod City Council, residents were relocated to an empty block several kilometres to the south, making way for the development of a new government centre. In Nayonbago, the city council allocated residents small plots of land and a small sum of money. In terms of infrastructure, provisional dirt roads were graded and an open-style sewage system was built. Beyond this, however, little was supplied. Demographically, the 2009 ISRC report states:

[Nayonbago] is a village of approximately 6,000 people and mainly consists of displaced persons, who have shanty type dwellings and little work. Most of the adult men work away from the village on the sugar cane fields and 60% of the population is under the age of 18 years. (Rotary News 2009)

Furthermore, the population of Nayonbago is almost exclusively Christian – with Roman Catholicism being by and large the most common denomination in the village.

Figure 1.1: Bacolod City, showing locations of Nayonbago and Sweetland Hotel.  
(source: Ryan Frazer 2013, adapted from Google Maps)
Each year, the project centres on a complete ‘home build’ – hence the involvement of Habitat for Humanity. Generally, a single house is funded and built from scratch by Australian volunteers and hired local builders, which is then donated to a family in Nayonbago. The receiving family, usually selected by the ISRC team leaders Mary and Alan, is typically known to the club through contact over previous years, and considered among the most ‘in need’ of assistance relative to other residents of Nayonbago. Beyond this, however, no set selection criteria exist.

In addition to the build, since 2009 the project has included an annual ‘HIB’ (*Haemophilus influenzae* type B) injection program, which provides vaccinations to around 1,000 Bacolodian children each year. Other ongoing projects in Nayonbago include: developing the primary school, building a ‘Wellness Centre’, and developing a ‘Livelihood Centre’. While other more sporadic or peripheral initiatives include: food and clothing programs for homeless Bacolodians, free dentistry, and providing computers and other learning tools for various Bacolodian institutions. Which activities eventuate will vary year-to-year, depending on funding and the specific skills of participants. Further, this continued contact over the previous eight annual projects means that the ISRC and ongoing team members are quite familiar to Nayonbago residents, and vice versa. Consequently, ongoing friendships and formalised professional partnerships have formed.

The annual home builds began in 2005, and were organised and funded by Wollongong Church of Christ and its congregation. Importantly, since 2009, the project has worked under the banner of Rotary International. However, Rotary, as an institution, exclusively funds ventures it considers ‘community projects’. Given the home build targets a single family—not the broader community—Rotary funds cannot be allocated to this aspect of the Philippines project. As such, the annual home build, since 2009, has been entirely privately funded. Members of the team provide the majority of this funding, with some longer-

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6 Mary and Alan were both participants in the current study. Participants will be given proper introductions in following chapter.
term members fundraising throughout the year through offering labour services (such as building and gardening) whose returns are intended specifically for the build. Significantly, this year-round fundraising means some participants remain actively involved in the Philippines project between trips.

1.2.3 The 2013 Philippines Project

In 2013, the project once again centred on a single home build in Nayonbago. The receiving family was selected in 2012, being familiar to the Rotary club over preceding projects, and having aided the team in previous builds. Other activities included providing HIB injections to approximately 1000 Bacolodian children aged 1-5, and donating over 100 reconditioned computers to local learning institutions.

The team of voluntourists consisted of 20 members and was comprised of Rotarians and members of the Church of Christ, as well as friends and spouses of both. The team of voluntourists was split into two groups: a vaccination team (comprised of 3 registered nurses and assistants) and a house build team (comprised of 7 people aged over 60 years of age) (see Chapter 3.4.2 for more details). The entire project ran over two weeks to a predetermined schedule. During the project, all voluntourists stayed in Sweetland Hotel, located approximately ten kilometres from Nayonbago and two kilometres from Bacolod City CBD (see Figure 1.1 above).

1.3 Thesis Structure

Having now introduced the project, this section will lay out the thesis structure. The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 2 explores the corpus of voluntourism literature in order to contextualise the voluntourism project of interest. The aim of this chapter is
threefold. First, to provide a genealogy of voluntourism, paying particular attention to the rise of ethical 'New Tourisms' in the late 20th century. Second, to review three dominant strands of voluntourism research: (1.) the role of voluntourism operators, (2.) the motivations of voluntourists, and (3.) the experiences and potential transformations of voluntourism. And, last, to introduce four conceptual tools of a feminist geographical perspective: the embodied tourist, the tourist performance, the tourist encounter, and the feminist ethics of care.

Chapter 3 explores the methodology across five sections. First, the importance of positionality and reflexivity in qualitative research is discussed. Attention then turns to research ethics, discussing both 'formal' and 'informal' ethical strategies. Third, the process of participant recruitment and the attributes of the final participant sample are explored. Next, the three tools of ethnographic data collection are discussed and justified, highlighting their relevance to the current project. These include: participant observation, solicited 'travel diaries', and semi-structured interviews. Last, Chapter 3 concludes by outlining the analytical tools drawn upon in exploring the collected data, described here as 'narrative ethnography'.

To address the guiding research questions the next three chapters lay out the analysis. Chapter 4 explores Nayonbago as a place of 'need'. Here, the relationships and tensions that emerge within how participants talked about their motivations, experiences, and embodied practices of becoming a voluntourist while constituting Nayonbago as a place of 'need' are examined. This chapter demonstrates the participants’ reproduction of three normative discourses of poverty. These discourses work to reify roles of 'needy'/'helper' and 'volunteer'/'voluntoured'. However, through exploring the participants’ encounters with socio-economic disadvantage, aged bodies, and ethical encounters, these categories are shown to be unstable and vulnerable.

Chapter 5 explores the discursive webs, embodied encounters, and performances that sustain Nayonbago as a place of ‘celebration’. This is achieved
through examining three 'celebratory' events. Analysis reveals that these events offer opportunities for the reproduction of 'identity-oriented' performances on stages understood as 'enclavic'. However, through shared experiences of joy—mediated through encounters with sounds, rhythm, motions, and the sensuous qualities of water—these social categories are sometimes ruptured and dissolved. These encounters foster an affectual closeness across social distance.

The final results chapter, Chapter 6, explores the discourses, embodied encounters, practices, and ethical dilemmas that sustain the participants' hotel as a 'restorative' space. Participants constituted the material threshold of the hotel as a social border that separated the 'oasis' of the hotel from the 'wilds' of the Philippines. Through examining participants' encounters with and practices of hotel air, water, food, and upholstery, the threshold of the hotel was felt as an oasis. The hotel allowed participants to recreate normative understandings and practices of comfort and cleanliness through maintaining the illusion of an impervious body. The ethical tension produced by the spatial irony of staying in a hotel understood as 'palatial' is resolved by recourse to the specific needs of aged bodies.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis. Here, first, the unique insights offered through exploring the sensuous experiences of older voluntourists are outlined. And, second, the thesis closes by offering a future research agenda on the experiences of older voluntourists.
2

Literature Review

2.1 An Introduction to the Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is threefold. The first is to offer a broad overview of the genealogy of voluntourism, paying particular attention to the rise of ostensively ethical forms of ‘New Tourism’. In order to contextualise the growing interest in voluntourism, the ascent and ethical tensions of ‘ecotourism’ are briefly discussed. Second, the dominant strands of current academic literature on voluntourism is reviewed, highlighting the themes investigated and conceptual tools drawn upon. Three primary themes within this research are explored: the role of voluntourism operators, the motivations of voluntourists, and the experiences and potential transformations of voluntourism. This discussion highlights the current gaps within the literature, including a paucity of research on the sensuous and embodied experiences of older voluntourists. Finally, the conceptual tools used for this thesis are introduced and fleshed out. Within a post-structuralist feminist framework, four primary tools are drawn upon in exploring the sensuous experiences of older voluntourists: the embodied tourist (Johnston 2001), the tourist performance (Edensor 2001), the tourist encounter (Crouch 2001; Gibson 2009), and the feminist ethics of care (Popke 2006; Waitt et al. 2007; Gibson 2010). To begin, however, a genealogy of voluntourism is presented.

2.2 Contextualising Voluntourism:

The Rise of New, Ethical, and Eco Tourisms

Sustainable tourism was the new buzzword of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This can be attributed to the confluence of at least two trends. First, the meteoric
growth of the number people travelling for pleasure during the late 20th century. Between 1950 and 2007 international tourist arrivals grew from 25 million to 903 million (Keese 2011: 258). Second, the heightened ethical awareness among some politicians and consumers of the social inequalities, injustices, destruction, and exploitation that often underpinned tourism. As Butcher (2003: 2) suggested, growing concerns about the potentially destructive effects of tourism on environments, cultures, economies, and societies meant “tourism [became] the subject of a discussion resembling a moral minefield.” Thus, the combination of these two trends led to tourism becoming embroiled in sustainable politics7.

The United Nations’ publication of two highly influential reports—Our Common Future (Brundlandt 1987) and Agenda 21 (Sitarz 1993)—transformed the framing of tourism futures within discourses of ‘sustainable development’. As Butcher (2003: 8) argued, these reports formalised “the commitment of global government to reforming the tourism industry," and encouraged environmentally and culturally 'softer' forms of travel to sustain places and societies for future generations. Indicative of this 'moral turn' within the tourism industry was the substantial rise of more ethical tourism products. Labelled 'New Tourisms', these niche markets were ideologically divergent from conventional tourisms, being linked more explicitly to of the notion of sustainable development. For Butcher (2003), it was the ‘new tourist’s’ ethically conscientious motivations that differentiated them from the more conventional tourist.

Although myriad other so-called New Tourisms now exist, ecotourism is certainly both the most politically influential and socially significant. While ecotourism encompasses a vast variety of tourism products and practices, as Figueroa and Waitt (2010: 264) explained: “at heart ‘ecotourism’ tends to concentrate on principles of environmental sustainability, empowering tourism service providers, and educating the traveller to be culturally sensitive and

7 It is important to acknowledge that the link between critiques of mass tourism and growth of new forms of tourism is contested and, consequently, should not be taken as a simple causal relation. Mowforth and Munt (2009) offer a useful discussion of this issue.
environmentally aware." Indicative of the influence and perceived promise of ecotourism was the UN's adoption of ecotourism as a sustainable development strategy (Mitchell & Ashley 2010). Further, ecotourism was later situated within its Millennium Development Goal of halving the rate of US$1-a-day poverty by 2015 (Mitchell & Ashley 2010: 2). Correspondingly, the global popularity of ecotourism grew rapidly throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

However, perhaps ironically, critics soon begun unravelling the ethical implications of this new form of ostensibly 'ethical' travel. Two main failings were highlighted. First, the formalisation of ecotourism through official branding⁸ led to the concern that ecotourism was becoming 'eco' in name only. That is, instead of being driven solely or primarily by ethical concerns, ecotourism arguably became simply another industry through which neoliberal markets could profit from consumer demand for ethical products (Lewis & Potter 2011: 16).

The second potential failing—sometimes referred to as the 'paradox of ecotourism'—could be hyperbolically summarised as "loving nature to death" (Butcher 2007: 39). Critics suggested that, in facilitating large numbers of tourists' entrance into environments and cultures understood as 'pristine', the ecotourism agenda is arguably inherently self-defeating. Places previously off the tourist circuit were 'opened-up' to the potentially destructive and unequitable forces of international tourism and capitalism. More cynically, Hannenberg (cited in Butcher 2003: 48) argued this potentially invasive mechanism means that ecotourism is, in reality, more damaging than mass tourism: "Mass tourists have a single redeeming factor – that they are less interested in 'encroaching' upon wilderness." Thus, although issues of tourism became increasingly moralised, the 'ethical' market responses remained vulnerable to critique. Voluntourism emerged to global significance in this socio-political context. With this in mind, the next section turns to the rise of voluntourism and the dominant strands of academic research.

⁸ Organisations that offer official ecotourism certifications to tourism operators include the UN's Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GTSC), the International Ecotourism Society, and its Australian counterpart, Ecotourism Australia.
2.3 The Rise of Voluntourism

New Tourisms continue to proliferate in the market place, despite extensive scholarly critiques. These include, for example, pro-poor tourism, justice tourism, rights-based tourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism (Figueroa & Waitt 2011; Whyte et al. 2011). Voluntourism is one of the most recent and significant forms of these ethical tourism markets in terms of both market size and—as Chapter 1 demonstrated—pop culture visibility.

Wearing's early and influential work, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that Make a Difference* (2001), provided the most commonly cited definition of voluntourism. Wearing defined those participating in voluntourism as:

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

As suggested by Pegg et al. (2012: 801), this definition is widely accepted because, although voluntourism includes an extremely broad set of tourism practices and products, it “encompasses the ideological essence of volunteer tourism.” Building on this, Coren and Gray (2012) described the voluntourist as one who goes beyond the ‘tourist gaze’ (see Urry & Larsen 2011), becoming an active contributor in the tourist experience (Coren & Gray 2012: 222). Voluntourism practices, it is thought, are differentiated from more conventional tourisms by the inclusion of altruistic motivations, and are generally marketed as being mutually beneficial to both tourists and their hosts (McIntosh & Zahra 2007). Hailed as the “new ‘poster-child’ of alternative tourism” (Lyons and Wearing 2008: 6), voluntourism is often claimed to be a more ethical and sustainable form of tourism.

As Wearing’s above definition highlights, voluntourism practices address a wide range of issues. Environment-based projects, for example, are generally
comprised of research or conservation agendas. Here, voluntourism may involve becoming an ‘environmental citizen’ through participating in the surveying of plant or animal populations, or replanting of forests (Guttentag 2009; McGehee & Andereck 2009). Alternatively, social-based projects generally focus on the alleviation of social and economic inequalities. These voluntourist projects may include facilitating educational programs, building community infrastructure and housing, addressing health and welfare, or developing social enterprises (Guttentag 2009; McGehee & Andereck 2009). Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011: 111) discuss this form of voluntourism as “tourism with a development agenda” – a point underscored by Tomazos and Butler (2008) who noted that most voluntourism projects are situated in the majority world.

2.4 The Extent of the Voluntourism Industry

Accurate data on the extent of the industry is difficult to acquire. Tomazos and Butler (2012) suggested this is partly due to the sector’s largely informal organisation and structure. However, preliminary scoping has found that over 1.6 million people each year pay to engage in humanitarian or environmental projects of six months or less (Mostafanezhad 2012: 2). Further, the Tourism Research and Marketing (TRAM 2008) firm estimated that, including fees paid to voluntourism operators, NGOs, airlines and other related expenditure, the total voluntourism market is worth between £832 million ($1.2b AUD) and £1.3 billion ($1.95b AUD). In terms of demography, TRAM estimated voluntourists are 80% female and over half are between 20 and 29 years old (TRAM 2008). Together these figures underpin Mostafanezhad’s (2012) claim that volunteer tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors. With this in mind, the discussion now turns to review the growing body of literature on voluntourism.

2.5 The Current Literature on Voluntourism: Operators, Motivations, and Experiences

A recent and impressively comprehensive literature review by Wearing and McGehee (2013) argued that academic work on voluntourism follows a four-
stage process: ‘advocacy’, ‘caution’, ‘adaption’, and the ‘scientific platform’. Their genealogy of voluntourism, although useful, is perhaps overly teleological, conceptualising voluntourism as following a predictable sequence of stages. In this thesis, however, academic work on voluntourism is discussed through focussing on the various approaches taken and themes investigated. Noting the “ambiguous intersections between volunteering and tourism” (Lyons & Wearing 2012: 88), Lyons and Wearing suggested research on voluntourism “overlaps a number of research fields including volunteer studies, tourism research, and leisure studies” (2012: 88). Consequently, research on voluntourism is inevitably interdisciplinary.

The vast majority of voluntourism research draws on various psychological and critical theories. This body of literature will be divided into three primary themes: the role of voluntourism operators, the motivations of voluntourists, and the experiences and transformations of voluntourism.

2.6 Voluntourism Operators

The first primary strand of research on voluntourism focused on the ‘sending organisations’ (Raymond & Hall 2008)—sometimes referred to as ‘volunteer sending agencies’ (Vodopivec & Jaffe 2011), ‘voluntourism operators’, or ‘facilitators’ (Barbieri et al. 2011)—that manage voluntourism projects. As Guttentag (2009: 538) explained, these include: “private companies, NGOs [non-government organisations], charities, universities, conservation agencies, religious organisations and governments.” There are at least three overlapping strands of work on voluntourism operators: the industry’s perpetuation of simplistic development agendas and ideals; the potential (de)commodification and (de)commercialisation of voluntourism; and, last, the relationship between neoliberalist ideology and voluntourism.

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9 As a point to note, the majority of the literature on voluntourism experiences assumes various preconfigured us/them binaries, including 'host'/‘guest’, 'volunteer'/‘volunteoured’, etc. While this thesis rejects these taken-for-granted categories, the following literature review will follow the various authors’ lead by reproducing their work using their terminology. However, as the three results chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, these categories are never fixed. Instead, they are always in danger of being ruptured, blurred, and destabilised.
2.6.1 Simplistic Development Agendas

A significant strand of work in this field discusses the various discourses perpetuated by organisations that manage voluntourism projects. Voluntourism has been long implicated with development agendas – highlighted by the fact the UN has explicitly described its potential role in global sustainable development (Mitchell & Ashley 2010). However, recent research suggested voluntourism operators often reproduce simplistic and unrealistic discourses of development (Simpson 2004; Palacios 2010).

Investigating the discourses of global development mobilised by various ‘gap year’ voluntourism operators, Simpson (2004) observed an apparent paradox. Simpson (2004: 683) found “the language of (international) development is rarely used in gap year marketing and discussion.” However, she argued, obfuscated discourses of development are instead implied through marketing slogans, such as ‘making a difference’ or ‘helping’. In this way, Simpson demonstrated how sending organisations often reproduce highly uncritical and simplistic discourses of development. In particular, global development is “seen as something that can be ‘done’, and specifically, by non-skilled, but enthusiastic volunteer-tourists” (Simpson 2004: 685) in their leisure time. This “mythology of development” (Simpson 2004: 682), in turn, perpetuates a simplistic ‘geography of need’, where ‘third world’ spaces are understood as requiring the assistance of their supposedly more capable Western counterparts.

Similarly, Palacios (2010), investigating the marketing materials used by a Western university-led voluntourism program, found the inappropriate use of a ‘development aid discourse’. That is, the university program’s marketing materials suggested student voluntourists would be taking part in ‘global development’. However, Palacios found this to be unrealistic, as students were not contributing to the host destinations in any tangible way. Worryingly, Palacios (2010: 862) argued that this inappropriate deployment of development discourse meant university programs “will potentially fall under the umbrella of the ‘neo-colonialism’ critique that has been leveled against many other
volunteer-oriented tour operators.” Consequently, Palacios suggested that voluntourism operators need to carefully consider their use of a ‘volunteering language’, and distance themselves from discourses of global development.

2.6.2 The Commodification and Commercialisation of Voluntourism

A second strand of research on voluntourism operators has investigated the potential (de)commodification and (de)commercialisation of voluntourism. In his pioneering text on voluntourism, Wearing (2001: 124) suggested NGOs present an opportunity to “change more than just volunteer tourism but the face of tourism overall.” This statement is informed by the hope that NGOs could offer more sustainable tourism products, and thus overcome the structural inequalities perpetuated by more conventional forms of tourism. Central to this is the concept and process of (de)commodification (Barbieri et al. 2011; Coren & Gray 2012; Lyons & Wearing 2012). Defined here as “processes [that] occur when the final outcome is defined as the economic use-value of a product or service” (Wearing et al. 2005: 424), propensity towards commodification was largely discussed as a source of many problems in conventional tourisms. On the other hand, Wearing et al. (2005: 435) suggested NGOs represented “best practice in decommodifying tourism,” where “tourism can exist in a decommodified and egalitarian form, escaping the strictly economic for a more diverse definition for tourism” (McGehee 2012: 85). However, subsequent research found Wearing’s hopes to perhaps be overly optimistic. As will be shown, the work of Tomazos and Butler (2009) and Lyons et al. (2012) revealed a trend towards increasing commodification and commercialisation of voluntourism.

As suggested previously, voluntourism products—originally a niche market largely sustained by NGOs—are increasingly being offered by commercial tourism operators. This has caused some to worry that voluntourism has become ‘hijacked’ by commercial interests (Vodopivec & Jaffe 2011: 125). Looking at gap year voluntourism products, Lyons et al. (2012: 372) argued that large,
Commercial tourism operators are increasingly offering packaged voluntourism products “that do little to serve the needs of either the volunteer tourists or the host communities they seek to serve.” Similarly, others have observed how NGOs now commonly develop partnerships with these commercial providers, engaging in market-based activities (Coghlan & Gooch 2011). As Keese (2011: 260) argued: “The international volunteer NGO needs a saleable product, which is the volunteer experience, and it must market this product to the consumer – the volunteer.” As such, despite initial hopes, there is a manifest trend towards increasing commercialisation of voluntourism.

Demonstrating this trend, through a desktop study on available voluntourism products on volunteerabroad.com, Tomazos and Butler (2009: 210) found: “there were more projects (77) based in countries with high HDIs [‘Human Development Indices’] than in countries with lower HDIs and thus a greater need for support (42).” Meaning, volunteer projects were not necessarily fuelled by ‘need’, as is often assumed. Instead, through subsequent interviews with various voluntourism operators, they found locations of projects were heavily influenced by the presence of ‘marketable’ settings. Consequently, they predicted, voluntourism is on a path similar to ecotourism, which, because of its eventual intense commercialisation and focus on profit, was often dubbed ‘egotourism’ (Tomazos & Butler 2009: 210).

Observing this trend towards increasing commodification and commercialisation, Wearing later suggested that voluntourism is “losing its essence” (cited in Lacey et al 2012: 1204). Furthermore, as the scale and diversity of the industry continues to expand, Tomazos and Butler (2009: 196) predict it “will lose more of the distinctive features that characterized its initial form.” In this way, the initial, optimistic hopes of voluntourism have been complicated and troubled by the addition of widespread commercial interests.

However, while criticising some commercial voluntourism ventures, Lyons et al. (2012: 372) also prompt us to ask: “Does it matter if volunteer tourism becomes commodified as long as it still provides assistance to various projects and
They argued that, beyond anecdotal accounts and rhetoric, there is no empirical data to suggest it does. Similarly, Tomazos and Cooper (2012: 410) argued that, although voluntourism is increasingly becoming more like conventional tourism, “there is a potentially acceptable relationship between monetary gain and altruistic service” within the industry.

2.6.3 Neoliberalism and Voluntourism

And, last, a third strand of research on voluntourism operators has explored the relationship between voluntourism and neoliberalism. A number of researchers emphasised the role of neoliberalist ideology in explaining the continued commodification of voluntourism and the perpetuation of simplistic development discourses (Conran 2011; Mostafanezhad 2012; Vodopivec & Jaffe 2011; Lyons et al. 2012). Here, neoliberalism is understood as “both an ‘art of government’ and a ‘class-based ideological project’ where the focus has been progressively transposed from the state to the individual and community” (Mostafanezhad 2012: 3).

Both Lyons et al. (2012) and Mostafanezhad (2012) argued that the infiltration of hegemonic neoliberalist ideology into voluntourism has contributed to, and explains, the increasing privatisation of global development agendas. Further, Mostafanezhad (2012) suggested that NGOs—which increasingly embody the neoliberalist ethic—are contributing to the increased depoliticisation of global inequality through shifting the focus from political and other structural causes to merely a question of individual moral behaviour. This is potentially problematic, she suggested, as neoliberalist ideology interprets global inequality as the ethical responsibility of the citizen rather than the state.

In this respect, Lyons et al. (2012) suggested that the gap year sector is particularly vulnerable. Gap year voluntourism is often touted as a means of expanding the skill sets of young people. Through what they term the “professionalisation of the gap year,” they suggest, “neoliberal values are
increasingly being applied to young people’s travel, leisure and educational practices” (Lyons et al. 2012: 369). This means the voluntourism industry will likely become increasingly inundated with young voluntourists seeking to enrich their curriculum vitae instead of wanting to address global inequality. Thus, ironically, voluntourism, originally conceptualised as a form of ‘political consumption’ that attempted to subvert and resist neoliberalist ideology, has arguably now become a vehicle for the expansion of neoliberalist development agendas (Lyons et al. 2012).

This research on voluntourism operators has revealed the complex ethical tensions and contradictions that exist within the industry – beginning with the optimistic hopes of Wearing (2001) and leading to subsequent and widespread critiques of the industry. Next, the literature review turns to the motivations of voluntourists.

2.7 The Motivations of Voluntourists

Researchers draw on a wide range of conceptual tools to examine the question of: ‘What makes a voluntourist travel?’ This section discusses insights from four approaches: functional psychology, post-structuralism, sociological approaches, and post-colonial theory.

2.7.1 Psychological Approaches

As Wearing and McGhee (2013: 123) observed: "Much of the debate about the motivations for volunteer tourists centres around the ‘self-interest versus altruism’ issue." Consequently, much research draws upon simple altruism-egotism dualisms and continuums in order to determine which factors predominantly motivate voluntourists. In light of this, psychological approaches to understanding voluntourist motivations largely aim to develop various voluntourist typologies and classifications. As Coren and Gray (2012: 225)
suggested: “The functional approach to psychology focuses on the personal and social functions being served by an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and actions.” Thus, this research is largely interested in the psychological factors that ‘push’ and ‘pull’ voluntourists into particular projects, and represents the bulk of the literature on voluntourist motivations.

Perhaps most influentially, Callanan and Thomas (2005) proposed a three-part typology for the motivational classification of voluntourists: shallow, intermediate, and deep. This typology is based upon six primary criteria, including: destination, length of project, level of engagement with locals, professional qualifications, focus of project, and ‘active’ versus ‘passive’ participation in the project. Here, ‘shallow voluntourists’ are primarily motivated by self-interest, concerned with aspects such as, “how their experience can be used for academic credit, enhancing their curriculum vitae and for ‘ego-enhancement’” (Callanan & Thomas 2005: 196). As such, shallow voluntourists tend to gravitate towards short-term projects in desirable tourist locations. Alternatively, for ‘deep’ voluntourists, “self-interest motives are secondary to altruistic ones” (Callanan & Thomas 2005: 196). These voluntourists tend to choose projects that clearly and directly contribute to the targeted communities and environments, and which often last six months or more.

In a similar vein, both Brown and Lehto (2005) and Coren and Gray (2012) argued that voluntourists could be divided into two primary groups by motivation: volunteer-minded and vacation-minded (see also Brown & Morrison 2003). As Mustonen (2007: 106) noted: “The adoption of altruistic and intrinsic motives is the most important factor creating differences between these two groups of tourists.” Following from this, Brown and Lehto (2005), using interviews and subsequent content analysis, found four main motivations in older participants from the US Ambassador Travel Club (ATC): cultural immersion, making a difference, seeking camaraderie, and family bonding. Also drawing upon this vacation/volunteer-minded motivational distinction, Coren and Gray (2012) conducted a multi-site comparative study across Vietnam and Thailand to investigate the relationship between commodification and younger
participant motivation. Through use of this functional psychology framework, they found that participant motivations between the two sites corresponded to the discernable differences in levels of commodification – volunteer-minded participants were more likely to be attracted to more de commodified voluntourism products, while the vacation-minded were more likely to be attracted to more commodified products.

Other researchers have framed the altruistic-egotistic discussion in terms of ‘personal’ (which can be considered egotistic) and ‘interpersonal’ factors (which can be considered altruistic). In examining a mix of younger students and older retirees working in a Chinese village, Chen and Chen (2011: 435) found four primary personal factors to account for voluntourism motivation: “authentic experience, interest in travel, challenge/stimulation, and other interest”; and four interpersonal factors: “desire to help, interaction with locals/cultures, encouraged by others, and enhancing relationships” (2011: 435). Interestingly, they found older voluntourists were statistically more likely to be motivated by interpersonal factors than younger participants.

Alternatively, from a psychological behaviour approach, Keese (2011: 261) argued: “The theory on tourist motivation that is most relevant to geography is ‘push and pull’.” Push factors are internal psychological motivations, “such as the desire for escape from the daily routine, relaxation, adventure, exploration of self and prestige” (Keese 2011: 261). These are the factors of most concern to the altruistic-egotistic motivational division. However, as Wearing (2004: 216) suggested, destination is key to the potential volunteer tourist. Following this observation, Keese (2011) combined a desktop study of voluntourism operators’ online materials and interviews with voluntourism managers to investigate the ways in which ‘pull factors’ affected participants’ consumption decisions. Keese (2011: 261) understood ‘pull factors’ as “the external factors that influence where a person chooses to go,” such as attractiveness of the destination or attributes of the project. Noting the geographic clustering of volunteering projects, Keese (2011) found that organisers drew upon five criteria in determining project location, including (in order of stated importance): safety,
need, attractiveness, previous experience in destination, and accessibility. Further, voluntourism organisers were found to intentionally use imagery that aimed to provoke potential voluntourists’ geographical imaginations, thereby capitalising on the external ‘pull’ factor of destination attractiveness.

In the same vein, in a study on an Ecuadorian conservation volunteer project, Grimm and Needham (2011) also argued for the importance of ‘moving beyond the individual’ and exploring the significance of ‘pull factors’. In their participants, these included a list of destination attributes, such as: opportunities for learning a new language, price of participation, and reputation of organisation. These factors played key roles in influencing participants’ decision-making. Grimm and Needham (2011) also highlighted the limitations of investigating motivations through self-reporting methods of participant interviews, and consequently conducted two strands of interviews: with both participants and organisers. They found discrepancies between the two groups, with “Managers and volunteer coordinators correctly identif[ying] some volunteer motivations (e.g., travel, price, amenities, services) but mention[ing] far fewer reasons than did volunteers” (2011: 297). This discrepancy is significant, as voluntourism organisers actively engage in promoting various pull factors to attract voluntourists. Although useful, voluntourist motivation typologies and classifications may be understood as potentially limited in dealing with the complexity of voluntourist motivations. Consequently, other researchers draw on critical theories of post-structuralism, sociology, and post-colonialism.

2.7.2 Post-structuralist Approaches

In contrast to the above psychological work, post-structuralist approaches do not endeavour to develop voluntourist motivational typologies or classifications. Instead, rejecting fixed or ultimate notions of ‘truth’, this work draws on critical theory to explore the plurality of meanings in voluntourism, including how these ideas are both sustained and ruptured. Using various post-structuralist approaches, researchers found voluntourist motivations to be entangled in such
varied notions as extending relations of care to others (McIntosh & Zahra 2007), search for individuality (Sin 2009), and self-actualisation (Mustonen 2006).

McIntosh and Zahra’s (2007) study on voluntourists working in a Maori village, for example, found altruistic motivations were a prime—if not supreme—motivator. Through semi-structured interviews, they found their sample group of young, female voluntourists to be more concerned with “volunteering, to ‘work; not just be tourists’, ‘to give’ and ‘to experience a service project’” (McIntosh & Zahra 2007: 546) than sightseeing or other leisure activities. In contrast, Sin (2009: 497) argued that, along with these altruistic motivations, “many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the ‘self.’” Out of his sample of eleven young, Singaporean voluntourists working in South Africa, only two indicated that their motivation to take part in a voluntourism project was to actually volunteer and contribute to the local community. Instead, participants drew upon dominant geographical imaginations of Africa, where volunteering “allowed them to see something new and exotic, to do something fun and exciting, or simply to escape mundane tasks at home” (Sin 2009: 488). Further, Sin found motivations for voluntourism to be intimately entangled in ideas of identity formation.

This last point is related to Mustonen’s (2006) work, which likens voluntourism to the traditional pilgrimage. Exploring a group of young voluntourists travelling to the Indian Himalayas, Mustonen (2006) argued that voluntourism could be considered a direct product of post-modernity, which encompasses the failure of meta-narratives and the search for individuality in post-modern environments. As Mustonen (2007: 110) argued: “Tourists adopting pro-social motives can be regarded as pilgrims looking for the ‘sacred experiences’ not in the places marked by the literature or traditions but in the places marked by their own or socialized expectations.” Thus, this work shows how voluntourism is often implicated in particularly Western, post-modern understandings of identity and a search for ‘enlightenment’ or ‘self-actualisation’.
2.7.3 Sociological Approaches

A smaller body of literature draws on sociological theories. Tomazos and Butler (2010), for example, drew upon the sociological work of Joseph Campbell and the idea of the journey as a 'rite of passage'. The 'Hero’s Journey'—a common motif underlying medieval and classical myths—involves the departure, initiation into higher stage of moral being, and triumphant return of the transformed individual. Talking to primarily younger participants working in a Mexican children’s refuge, Tomazos and Butler (2010: 363) found: “Volunteers interviewed revealed the traits explaining their participation in volunteer tourism [...] were similar to the characteristics and driving forces found in the participants on Campbell’s ‘Hero’s Journey’.” Here, voluntourism is conceptualised as an egoistic, but largely positive and morally transformative force on participants.

In a later but related study that drew on the same ethnographic data, Tomazos and Butler (2012) argued that motivations are inevitably context-dependent. Here, they likened tourist motivations to a ‘balancing act’ or ‘motivational see-saw’ between work and pleasure. They concluded that “whatever [participants’] initial motivations or intentions, when presented with the leisure/fun element of the experience, [they] are vulnerable to succumbing to the hedonistic pursuits available” (2012: 185). As such, voluntourists must continually navigate their choices between pleasure and responsibility, and these decisions are inevitably based on myriad contextual factors.

2.7.4 Post-colonialist Approaches

Lastly, and potentially more worryingly, Burns and Barrie (2005) found some volunteer and philanthropic tourists were driven by strong neo-colonial motives. Drawing on post-colonial dependency theory, they interviewed several NGO staff and other various stakeholders involved in projects that aimed to address rural
regeneration and poverty reduction in a South African Village. For example, one female Canadian staff member talking about developing a school program in the village said: “they feel like they own it, their own little world, that they own a piece of Africa, it’s a great holiday experience for them” (Burns & Barrie 2005: 469 – emphasis in original). Following this, Burns and Barrie (2005) suggested voluntourism was potentially becoming a new form of ‘tied aid’ that fostered neo-colonial relations of dependency.

As this section has shown, researchers draw on diverse theoretical frameworks in unravelling voluntourist motivations. Perhaps predictably, this work generated vastly different explanations, ranging from altruism to exploitation. Next, the literature review turns to the third primary strand of voluntourism research: the experiences and transformations of voluntourism.

2.8 The Experiences and Transformations of Voluntourism

This section will provide an overview of the central debates surrounding voluntourism experiences and transformations, paying attention to the various conceptual frameworks drawn upon in interpreting these experiences. A number of approaches will be discussed, including psychological, critical theories, and—most pertinent to this thesis—approaches that emphasise the voluntourists’ experience as ‘sensuous’.

2.8.1 Psychological Approaches to Voluntourist Experiences

Similar to work on voluntourist motivations, a small but valuable body of literature draws on psychological frameworks in exploring voluntourist experiences. For instance, Alexander (2012: 119) used standardised web-based personality tests to explore “the influence of age, gender, project type and length of stay on the impacts of a volunteer tourism experience.” She found significant positive changes occurred as a result of a program based in South Africa.
Statistically, younger volunteers (16-29) were more likely to experience change across all measured traits, excluding ‘liberalism’ and ‘cautiousness’. The most important variable, they found, was the length of program, with more significant changes occurring in participants from 5-12 week programs compared to 1-5 weeks. Similarly, using psychometric testing, Bailey and Russell (2010) found immediate and long-term effects in young voluntourists who were involved in teaching through an American inner-city educational program. Statistically, volunteering enhanced “the openness, civic attitudes, and wisdom of college participants” (2010: 352). As such, both Alexander's (2012) and Bailey and Russell's (2010) research appears to largely confirm the transformative claim of voluntourism, through facilitating cross-cultural understanding and fostering ‘global citizenship’.

Table 2.1: Steps involved in transformative learning and volunteer tourism. (source: adapted from Coghlan & Gooch 2011).

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Alternatively, drawing on Mezirow’s psychological work on ‘transformative learning’, Coghlan and Gooch (2011: 714) argued that voluntourism has the potential to lead to “emancipatory social transformation and engagement in participative, democratic processes.” However, through conducting an extensive literature review they suggested that, currently, most voluntourist experiences do not contain all the conditions needed to complete the 10-stage transformative process, as outlined below in Table 2.1 above. These missing stages included ‘developing a plan of action’ and ‘acquisition of knowledge and skills for
implementing the plan’. Consequently, they suggested organisations should work more intentionally to fulfil the transformative potential of volunteer tourism.

Last, less-researched aspects of voluntourism experiences are the potentially negative effects of voluntourism on participants. Using psychological survey data from various voluntourism projects, Grabowski and Wearing (2008) found that some voluntourists experienced difficulty readjusting to everyday life post-volunteering. In what they call ‘re-entry shock’ Grabowski and Wearing (2008: 3) found participants often experienced “difficulty resuming work, study and relationships, [and] getting used to the pace of life.” Through drawing on various psychological methods and frameworks, the above work offers valuable insights into voluntourist experiences.

However, the vast majority of research on voluntourist experiences draws upon various qualitative ethnographic methods and critical approaches – primarily through interviews, in-field observation, and autoethnography. The literature review now explores this body of work.

2.8.2 The Experiences of and Benefits to the ‘Voluntoured’

Voluntourism research has largely investigated the motivations, experiences, and benefits of voluntourists themselves. However, as Gray and Campbell (2007: 464) argued: "While it is important to understand the volunteers, they represent only one half of the story.” The dearth of research on the experiences and benefits of voluntourism on hosts—or the so-called ‘voluntoured’ (McGhee & Andereck 2009)—is both significant and unfortunate, considering the industry’s purported altruistic goals of addressing inequalities.

Recently, however, a small body of work investigates ‘host’ experiences. For example, a number of papers have highlighted the potential benefits to the voluntoured (McIntosh & Zahra 2007; Barbieri et al. 2011). Drawing on an autoethnographic approach, Barbieri et al. (2011) observed that Rwandan host
communities received economic benefits through employment opportunities and tourist consumption. Similarly, Spencer (2010) argued that Cuban hosts were empowered through the growth of voluntourism by extending their global networks. However, both of these researchers’ methodologies relied solely on researcher observations and interviews with ‘guests’ without talking directly to community members or collecting data on employment and economic flows. Thus, any conclusions must be taken cautiously.

In a somewhat glowing account of voluntourism, through interviews with host community members in a Maori village, McIntosh and Zahra (2007) found their hosts generally regarded the experiences as mutually beneficial. However, it is unclear if this included material or immaterial benefits. In a more comprehensive study, Burns and Barrie (2005) revealed a more complex and nuanced relationship between guests and hosts in South Africa, with many members of the South African host community expressing ambivalence towards the work being done by volunteers. Alternatively, by interpreting survey data through use of ‘social exchange theory’, McGehee and Andereck (2009) reported that their Mexican hosts perceived personal benefit from voluntourism. Understandably, as McGhee and Andereck (2009) suggested, hosts’ vocal support for voluntourism increased with perceived benefits.

However, echoing earlier critiques of ecotourism, Guttentag (2009: 548) warned in his extensive and refreshingly critical literature review of voluntourism research: “If volunteer tourism is promoted for its potential positive impacts while overlooking its potential negative impacts, the sector risks becoming a ‘Trojan Horse’ that communities embrace without realising its possible consequences.” Guttentag (2009: 537) went on to suggest that possible negative effects on host communities and individuals include:

[…] a neglect of locals’ desires, caused by a lack of local involvement; a hindering of work progress and the completion of unsatisfactory work, caused by volunteers’ lack of skills; a decrease in employment opportunities and a promotion of dependency, caused by the presence of volunteer labour;
a reinforcement of conceptualisations of the ‘other’ and rationalisations of poverty, caused by the intercultural experience; and an instigation of cultural changes, caused by the demonstration effect and the actions of short-term missionaries.

Thus, the experiences and potential benefits of voluntourism on host communities require close scrutiny – especially considering the inherent social power inequalities in voluntourism encounters and that voluntourists “flow unilaterally from north to south” (Palacios 2010: 863). If left unchecked, forms of neo-colonialism and imperialism could be reproduced. McGehee and Andereck (2009), for instance, found some voluntourism programs created dependency in their Mexican host communities. A particular concern being voluntourism programs may work against employment opportunities for host community members. Jobs are often given to untrained volunteers who are actually willing to pay to do the work usually taken up by local community members (Guttentag 2009: 544). Additionally, McGehee and Andereck (2009) reported on host resentment towards the religious components of some voluntourism projects. In light of this, host experiences and potential transformations require further critical investigation.

2.8.3 The Experiences of and Benefits to the Voluntourists

The vast majority of the ethnographic literature, however, has focused on the experiences and potential benefits or transformations of voluntourists. Much of this lends support for the purported benefits. In Brown's (2005) study on older voluntourists (aged 40-72 years) with assorted volunteering histories, she found that meaningful guest-host relationships were often formed, leading to long-term positive effects on these voluntourists. Using content analysis on semi-structured interviews, Brown (2005: 494) suggested: “The enduring benefit effects centre around the developments of both self and others, as well as social relationship enhancement.” She goes as far to state that volunteer tourism is “a good example of cultivating peace through tourism” (Brown 2005: 479).
Analogously, other work has lent credence to the claim voluntourism experiences foster increased political activism, international solidarity, and ‘global citizenship’ (McGehee & Santos 2005; Spencer 2010). Here, again, the importance of host-guest relationships is emphasised.

Drawing upon Foucauldian critical theory and ‘social movement theory’, McGehee and Santos’s (2005) exploration of a number of well-established NGOs found evidence of voluntourism acting as a catalyst for social change. Interactions with hosts led to consciousness-raising among some participants. Furthermore, some participants spoke of alliances and networks with other voluntourists as facilitating intentions for political activism. Although looking specifically at education and rights-based tourism in Cuba, Spencer’s (2010) autoethnographic work heralded similar findings. Here, American participants were transformed into more active and politically radicalised citizens. The relationships formed, with both hosts and other participants, fostered a “sense of communitas” (Spencer 2010: 82), which in turn cultivated solidarity with the host nation.

Likewise, in their ethnographic study of young Australian voluntourists working in a Maori village, Zahra and McIntosh (2007) suggested some voluntourism experiences could foster significant moral transformations. They found evidence that both the formation of meaningful relationships and encounters with poverty increased participants’ “social and political awareness, [...] changing their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours” (Zahra & McIntosh 2007: 116). More specifically, participants’ attitudes towards material possessions, “the value given to the human being” (Zahra & McIntosh 2007: 118), and their sense of justice and social responsibility were likely to be altered and enhanced. From this, they claimed: “These experiences were not 'traditional' tourism experiences; they were life changing” (Zahra & McIntosh 2007: 118). This, they argued, is form of ‘catharsis’.

In a related study drawing on the same ethnographic material, McIntosh and Zahra (2007) further emphasised the central importance of voluntourist-host relationships. They found respondents “defined the essence of the experience as
a ‘personally meaningful relationship’” (McIntosh & Zahra 2007: 550). Following interviews with participants, McIntosh and Zahra (2007) made the perhaps sweeping claims that “Self-reflection and personal development are characteristic of the volunteer tourism experience generally” (2007: 549), and:

> With volunteer tourism, intense rather than superficial social interactions can occur; a new narrative between host and guest is created, a narrative that is engaging, genuine, creative and mutually beneficial. The narrative and traditional interaction between host and tourist is thus potentially rewritten as the tourist experience is actively constructed by the host as well as the tourist. (McIntosh & Zahra 2007: 554)

This very optimistic account of the morally transformative effects of voluntourism requires qualification. McIntosh and Zahra cannot expect to generalise the experiences of Australian voluntourists working in a Maori village across all voluntourism contexts. Indeed, encounters between voluntourists and the ‘voluntoured’ are not always “mutually beneficial.” As the following research on ‘gap year’ voluntourism demonstrates, the relationships of voluntourists may be highly exploitative.

‘Gap year’ voluntourism is the central target of criticism within the volunteer tourism industry. For example, Lyons et al.’s (2012: 373) critical work on Australian gap year voluntourism found: “despite the rhetoric that links gap year tourism with global citizenship such an association remains empirically unsupported.” More often, Lyons et al. (2012) suggested, voluntourism reinforced negative stereotypes of hosts in voluntourists. Considering this, they argue that gap year voluntourism—situated within a neoliberalist context—often perpetuated simplistic binaries of ‘us and them’, and is in danger of legitimising the neo-colonialist or imperialist attitudes and behaviours of voluntourists. Similarly, in Simpson’s (2004: 688) investigation of various gap year voluntourist programs, she found that, through gap-year volunteer tourism: “students are able to confirm, rather than challenge, that which they already know.” For example, the discourse of the ‘poor-but-happy’, often found in
tourism literature, “can be turned into an experience of poor-but-happy” (Simpson 2004: 688). The danger here is that structural inequalities are then excused and even justified by voluntourists. Following from this, and in line with post-colonial theorists Edward Said and Paulo Freire, Simpson (2004: 690) suggested: “What the gap year experience is lacking is a pedagogy for social justice.” Without this, she argued, voluntourism risks perpetuating the inequalities it purports to address. Lastly, building on Simpson’s work, Raymond and Hall (2008) also found evidence of the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes in various voluntourist programs. They concluded that “the development of cultural appreciation and understanding should be approached as a goal of volunteer tourism” (2008: 538), rather than assumed as an inevitable outcome.

2.8.4 Experiences and Transformations: Embodied Approaches

In understanding voluntourism experiences and transformations, the majority of ethnographic research has employed interviews alongside content and discourse analysis. However, a smaller, but growing body of literature is employing embodied and sensuous approaches. This work seeks to understand the lived and corporeal experiences of becoming a voluntourist.

Drawing on the work of Tim Edensor (2000, 2001), Sin (2009) conceptualised the voluntourist as always sensuous and performative. Put simply, tourists are understood as being “active narrators of their experiences, seeking to perform their ‘selves’ with elements of self-authorship and self-actualization” (Sin 2009: 491). Sin (2009) found young Singaporean voluntourists working in a South African village often used their experience to perform a self that is differentiated from other non-volunteers. Participants took risks and engaged in volunteer labour to express an identity of worldliness, sensitivity, and altruism. Significantly, Sin found evidence that ‘heterogeneous spaces’—what Edensor defined as spaces “where activities and people mingle, allowing a wide range of encounters and greater expressiveness” (Edensor 2000: 327)—were often more evident in voluntourism than in more conventional tourism. However, Sin
observed these voluntourism experiences had little affect on her participants’ post-trip behaviours.

Similarly, Crossley (2012a, 2012b) also emphasised the sensuous body, highlighting the role of emotions. Drawing on the ideas of Hollway and Jefferson (2000), Crossley developed a psychosocial framework to explore the experiences of young female voluntourists working in Kenya. Crossley (2012a: 88) looked at how “unconscious affects can temper and diminish the effect” of moral transformations. She found participants were often motivated by a “pursuit of emotions” (Crossley 2012a: 90), which, through embodied encounters with poverty, were anticipated as having transformative effects. This parallels religious motifs of ‘redemptive suffering’. However, she argued, anxiety and guilt were common emotional responses provoked by these encounters with poverty. To help reduce anxieties of encounters with poverty, participants often resorted to the ‘poor-but-happy’ discourse. As such, Crossley (2012a, 2012b) suggested the moral transformations of her voluntourist participants were often left unfulfilled.

2.9 Gaps in the Current Literature

As the above review demonstrates, research seeking to understand the experiences of older voluntourists has thus far been relatively limited. Instead, most critical research has investigated the experiences and transformations of specifically younger voluntourists—especially those understood as ‘gap year’ voluntourists—or failed to make a distinction by age. Further, excluding Sin’s (2009) and Crossley's (2012a, 2012b) papers, there has been a lack of work that emphasises the sensuous or embodied voluntourist. This thesis aims to address these gaps. With this in mind, the conceptual framework is now outlined.
2.10 An Introduction to the Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this section is to outline the conceptual tools used to address the research aims. Epistemologically, this study is firmly grounded in post-structuralist feminist theory. Here, space and subjectivity are conceptualised as inextricably relational, mutually sustaining, and permeated with hierarchical relationships of power. In order to explore these relationships within the context of voluntourism, four primary conceptual tools are drawn upon: the embodied tourist, the tourist performance, the tourist encounter, and the feminist ethics of care. These epistemologically overlapping tools are woven together and drawn out in diverse ways through the process of analysis. In turn, each tool will now be described, highlighting its relevance to the project.

2.10.1 A Post-structuralist Feminist Epistemology

As Johnston (2001: 181) persuasively argued: “the study of tourism within the social sciences is built on Western hierarchical dualisms and tends to produce hegemonic, disembodied, and masculinist knowledge.” Historically, tourism studies largely drew upon positivist conceptualisations of space and identity. Here, people and place are largely assumed to be fixed and prefigured, precluding the heterogeneity of tourist experiences. Recently, however, there has been a shift towards more critical and flexible conceptualisations of tourism – as the above literature review demonstrates. In the introductory article of the first edition to the journal Tourist Studies, Franklin and Crang (2001) set out a new tourism research agenda. Franklin and Crang (2001: 5) argued that “tourism studies had become stale, tired, repetitive and lifeless,” and thus proposed the development of more theoretically driven, interdisciplinary, and innovative approaches. Tourism studies has subsequently sought increasingly critical and nuanced approaches to “escape from the theoretical straitjacket which has bounded them for so long” (Edensor 2001: 59). One strand of research has turned to the sensuous tourist body.
2.10.2 The Embodied Tourist

As Johnston (2001: 181) suggested, accounts of tourism are “Too often [...] presented as methodologically precise and statistically impeccable but otherwise disembodied.” Alternatively, she argued, a focus on embodiment ruptures institutionally engrained mind/body dualisms in tourism studies and unveils the multifarious verity of tourist experiences. Rather than being predetermined, prefigured, or simply blank canvases on which meaning can be inscribed, bodies are fleshy, affective, and relational. Further, although it is pertinent to acknowledge the myriad discursive structures that sustain and distinguish bodies, the sensual corporealities of bodies must not be ignored. Thus, the capacity for affective bodies to be complicit in both rupturing and reproducing dominant discourses is increasingly a central focus of interest in geographical research (see Longhurst 2000; Evers 2006).

In her study on bodies in gay pride parades, for example, Johnston (2001: 196) found: “Sexually embodying tourism challenges Western constructions of disembodied masculinist knowledge.” At gay pride parades, (often ambiguously) gendered and sexualised bodies are ‘put on display’ for an enraptured public to ‘gaze’ upon. Onlookers both upheld and unsettled discourses that sustained these bodies as ‘Other’. The ambiguity of queer bodies unveiled the porousness of dominant masculinist dichotomies, such as ‘straight/gay’, ‘mind/body’, and ‘Self/Other’ (Johnston 2001: 181). Consequently, a focus on bodies calls for researchers to think beyond ‘sets of ideas’ and into the fleshy, corporeal aspects of (volunteer) tourist experiences. With a focus on the corporeality of older voluntourists, the ‘embodied tourist’ offers a useful conceptual tool through which to analyse qualitative data.
2.10.3 The Tourist Performance

A second strand of embodied tourism research has employed the powerful metaphor of ‘performance’ to reconceptualise tourism. Drawing on the early dramaturgical work of Goffman (1959), Edensor (2000, 2001) argued that tourists and tourism spaces are often sustained through ritualised performances, including actors, stages, choreographers, scripts, and props. Thus, rather than being wholly static or preconfigured, tourism is instead “a process which involves the ongoing (re)construction of praxis and space in shared contexts” (Edensor 2001: 60). Where Goffman (1959) was largely concerned with performance as being cognitive and intentional, Edensor (2000) emphasised the unreflexive, subconscious, or precognitive aspects of tourist performances. Through competently enacting particular recognisable performances, we attempt to convey meaning and alignment with particular social groups (Edensor 2001: 71). For example, Hyde and Olesen (2011) found even the mundane activity of packing for travel is implicated in performativities of touristic identity construction. Thus, performance signifies identity and reproduces common sense understandings of “how to be a tourist” (Hyde & Olesen 2011: 900). Here, performance overlaps significantly with embodiment, because there is a focus on what a body does.

Exploring tourist performances, Edensor (2000; 2001) suggested that space—or ‘stages’—can be understood as lying on a spectrum from ‘enclavic’ to ‘heterogeneous’, depending on the degree to which performances are prescribed by the tourism industry. Enclavic spaces—also referred to as “single-purpose spaces” or “purified spaces” (Edensor 2001: 60)—are highly regulated and carefully managed. Hegemonic performances and meanings are reproduced by keeping ambiguity to a minimum: “the stage [...] kept uncluttered and pristine” (Edensor 2001: 69). For example, Edensor (2001) found tourist performances at the Taj Mahal, India, unfold in predictable ways. Guides—both human and textual—regulated and directed tourists around the site, while tourists drew on props (such as the ubiquitous camera) in reproducing hegemonic meanings of ‘what a tourist is’. However, this is not to suggest that tourist performances are
entirely preconfigured or to advocate spatial determinism. Rather, “Each performance can never be exactly reproduced and fixity of meaning must be continually strived for” (Edensor 2001: 72). Enclavic spaces, then, stand in contrast to heterogeneous spaces.

To visualise the difference between enclavic and heterogeneous spaces, Crouch and Desforges (2003: 8) asked us to imagine “the heterotopia of the market to the homogenia of the plush hotel.” Unlike enclavic spaces, heterogeneous spaces are ‘weakly classified’ and multi-purpose (Edensor 2000: 327). Performances are here less bound by prescriptive or hegemonic meanings of tourism, and are thus less predictable. As Edensor (2000: 333) suggested, these spaces “provide stages where transitional identities may be performed alongside the everyday enactions of residents, passers-by and workers.” Again, however, heterogeneous spaces are not entirely free from discursive or physical regulation, but are instead more open to diverse performances, spontaneity, and improvisation.

Following this, Edensor (2000) (tentatively) identified three primary types of tourist performances. First, ‘disciplined rituals’ follow highly pre-scripted, restricted, and ritualistic conventions, and “are often akin to ceremonial dramas” (Edensor 2000: 335). Second, ‘improvised performances’, “rely on contexts and instructions […] to provide a broad framework within which some improvisation may take place” (Edensor 2000: 335). And, third, ‘unbounded performances’ take place where stages are not easily identifiable or demarcated, and performances are largely left open and unrehearsed. Again, this typology is not intended to be categorical, but rather to offer a framework through which to interpret tourist performances. The ‘tourist performance’ thus offers a useful tool in addressing the research aims, examining the diverse ways voluntourists negotiate sites prepared for their volunteer labour.
2.10.4 The Tourist Encounter

A third strand of recent tourism studies research centres on the concept of the ‘tourist encounter’. Following Gibson (2010: 521), the notion of ‘encounter’ is here conceptualised as “the manner in which tourism catalyses the entanglements of people, places and identities.” Thus, a focus on encounter “enables closer dissection of the moments and spaces in which power is exercised, [...] relations of care extended” (Gibson 2010: 521), people are affected, and the capacities of people to act are either increased or decreased. Crouch et al. (2001) argued that the encounter lies at the very heart of tourism, and is perhaps its distinguishing feature. That is, individuals are very often motivated to travel by a desire to encounter other places, people, and cultures.

Aligning closely with the previous two conceptual tools, tourist encounters are inescapably embodied, immediate, and geographical (Gibson 2010: 521). Through the encounter, bodies, places, cultures, and meanings are brought into contact with one another. However, as Valentine (2008: 333) suggested, encounters “never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power.” Instead, encounters are mediated through the complex, relational interplay of discourse, affect, emotions, and performance. Through focusing on the tourist encounter, therefore, we may become “attentive to how bodies and materials interact in fluid, complicated ways” (Gibson 2010: 524).

For example, through examining the micro-politics of urban etiquette, Valentine (2008) found spontaneous urban encounters were often rife with contradiction. More specifically, gaps between values and practice revealed tensions between performing ‘British’ identity (which implies public displays of politeness) and enacting ingrained ethnic prejudices. Here, even the prosaic urban encounter is mediated by hegemonic meanings of ‘Britishness’. Thus, the ‘tourist encounter’, provides a conceptual lens through which to better understand the experiences of older voluntourists as embodied, social, cultural, and spatial.
Finally, the notion of a feminist ethics of care is central to this project. A feminist ethics of care does not embrace prescriptive codes of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Instead, it draws on Foucault’s argument that by caring for others we care for ourselves (see Popke 2006). Following a feminist approach to ethics, categorical ethical labelling can obfuscate how ethical conduct is negotiated at a personal level in which the spatial context of an encounter is of central interest. In this way ‘ethical dilemmas’ may arise. Hence, a feminist ethics of care is understood as affective, embodied, and relational (Popke 2006: 505). Instead of assuming ethical conduct, the question then becomes: “How are ethical dilemmas confronted in encounters, and resolutions to them rehearsed?” (Gibson 2010: 525).

Following the notion of a feminist ethics of care, the central questions become when and how voluntourist encounters open (or close) moral gateways, and how these moral terrains are subsequently negotiated by voluntourists (Waitt et al. 2007). As Gibson (2010: 523) suggested: “Cultural exchanges take place in unfolding circumstances, relationships develop (or deteriorate) and reactions are negotiated.” Thus, the feminist ethics of care looks to uncover the moments of encounter in which relations of care are extended (or not) between bodies. Returning to Valentine’s (2008) work on urban etiquette, she showed that “etiquette does not equate with an ethics of care and mutual respect for difference” (Valentine 2008: 329). Instead, relations of care are contingently mediated by myriad discourses, performances, and sensuous bodies. A feminist ethics of care is discussed further in the methodology section.

The four conceptual tools outlined above are intimately related through their focus on the situated, lived, and embodied experiences of people, and their understanding of space and subjectivity as relational. Together each concept brings unique insights to address the research aims. In interpreting participant data, the four concepts are woven together and drawn out in diverse ways.
Having now contextualised voluntourism, explored the current body of voluntourism literature, and outlined the four conceptual tools used in this thesis, Chapter 3 turns to the project’s methodology. This chapter will focus on how rigour was maintained throughout the research process, and the relevance of each methodological tool in addressing research aims.
3

Methodology

3.1 An Introduction to the Feminist Methodology

Following the post-structuralist feminist epistemology outlined in the conceptual framework, the aim of this chapter is to provide a justification of methodologies. Unlike positivist research, which largely relies on the relatively narrow and inflexible notion of ‘validity’, feminist research instead aims for methodological ‘rigour’. As Dyck (2002: 244) stated: “There is no one ‘good’ way to do feminist research – every project must create logical and practical links to approaching a specific topic in a particular context.” Consequently, qualitative feminist research must navigate the inherent tensions between methodological flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to the subtleties of human experience, while also ensuring rigour (Baxter & Eyles 1997: 505). A central technique in this endeavour is researcher reflexivity.

As feminist research recognises the impossibility of researcher objectivity—what Cope (2002) labels the ‘myth of neutrality’—researchers must instead conceptualise knowledge as being always both situated and embodied (see Haraway 1988). This is best achieved through reflexivity. Dowling (2010: 31), following England (1994), defines reflexivity as “a process of constant, self-conscious scrutiny of the self as a researcher and of the research process.” Dowling gives preliminary advice on how best to aim for reflexivity (see Dowling 2010: 31). Conceding the inevitability of partiality and subjectivity of research “is not an acknowledgement of defeat” (Ekinsmyth 2001: 179). Rather, it allows the inherent biases, hierarchies, and power relations to be written into the research – thus enhancing methodological rigour (Ekinsmyth 2001). Of course, we must acknowledge the limits of reflexivity, and the fact that “recognizing or even being
sensitive to these power relations does not remove them” (England 1994: 85). However, it is also only through making visible power relations that they can begin to be addressed (England 1994).

With these initial remarks in mind, the chapter is divided into five primary sections. The first section provides a discussion on researcher positionality and the importance of ongoing researcher reflexivity in qualitative research. The next section outlines research ethics, explaining the project’s use of both formal and informal ethical strategies, which were informed by a ‘feminist ethic of care’. Attention then turns to the process of participant recruitment and the attributes of the resulting participant sample. The penultimate section outlines and justifies the three methodological tools drawn upon in obtaining ethnographic data from the sample. These included participant observation, solicited ‘travel diaries’, and semi-structured interviews. This chapter then concludes by outlining the benefits in drawing on the analytical tools of narrative ethnography. Each section illustrates how rigour was continually achieved throughout the research process.

3.2 Positionality

The aim of this section is to explore the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the project. First, key literature on ‘positionality’ in qualitative feminist research is discussed. And, second, the concept’s relevance to this project is then explored, highlighting the ways in which the author’s subjectivity has both shaped and been shaped by the research. In this respect, three examples of researcher positionality in the current project will be explored.

3.2.1 Positionality in Feminist Research

In feminist research, the concept of positionality was developed and deployed in order to address concerns of unequal (and often unacknowledged) relations of power. As argued by England (1994: 62), researchers “do not parachute into the
field with empty heads and a few pencils or tape-recorder in our pockets ready to record the ‘facts’.” Instead, by recognising that “the researcher’s positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork”, and that “fieldwork is a dialogical process which is structured by the researcher and the participants” (England 1994: 80), the inherent power relations and hierarchical qualities of research can be approached.

In line with Haraway’s (1988) notion of ‘situated knowledges’, researcher positionality recognises that “we are not dematerialized, disembodied entities” (England 1994: 85). Instead, our particular biographies, imaginations, and corporealities are brought along with us into the field—as well as those of the participants—and these both influence and shape the project in complex ways. What questions are asked, how questions are framed, what methods are used, how researchers are received by participants, interpretations of data—among myriad other factors—are all informed by a researcher’s embodied positionality. Importantly, positionality is forever fluid and unstable, shifting continuously throughout the research process.

This reflexive acknowledgement of researcher influence and subsequent writing of oneself into the research, however, is not unproblematic. Theorists highlight three key critiques. First, for some, there is a danger of perpetuating positivism’s “‘god trick’ of complete vision” (Gregory et al. 2009: 557). That is, we must not make the mistake of believing researchers have perfect self-insight or understanding of the ways in which their positionality affects the research, and vice versa. This view would fall victim to the same feminist critique of positivism outlined above. As argued by Haraway: “there is an irresolvable ‘unknowability’ of our own positions and those of others” (cited in Gregory et al. 2009: 557), and this fallibility must be openly acknowledged. Second, although “Reflexivity can make us more aware of asymmetrical or exploitative relationships […] it cannot remove them” (England 1994: 86). Instead, researchers must remain vigilant in being aware and addressing the out-flowing effects of power in their research. And, finally, it could be argued that conceding the reciprocal relationship between research and researcher precludes the creation of knowledge. However,
again, the situated nature of knowledge production must be kept in the fore, as “attending to positionality [...] is the route to objectivity” (Gregory et al. 2009: 556) – although this might be an objectivity in an altered sense of the conventional term.

3.2.2 Positionality in Voluntourism Research

In applying the concept of positionality to this project, I endeavour to explain the ways in which I—with all my histories, biases, corporealities, etc.—shape and am shaped by the research. On one hand, due to the complexity of the project and my own cognitive and reflexive limitations, any attempt will do so will inevitably be incomplete and inaccurate. That is, following Waitt (2010: 225), “it may be impossible to ever fully locate oneself in a research project.” However, on the other hand—as explained previously—this does not render the project either fruitless or redundant. Rather we must instead recognise and work within these inherent limitations. Considering this, I will now discuss three examples of researcher-research reciprocity.

First, my relationship with Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club (ISRC) came about through my membership of the Illawarra Rotaract Club (IRC)—a community club for under-30s—which the ISRC ‘sponsors’. Being IRC’s ‘parent club’, the ISRC has a responsibility to guide and ensure the ongoing success of IRC and its members. Consequently, upon hearing of ISRC’s ongoing project in the Philippines and expressing my interest in both joining and having it as my thesis focus, I was enthusiastically invited to meet with the organising members of the team. Being positioned as a young university student, passionate about social issues and community volunteering, ISRC were clearly eager to aid me in any way possible. Indeed, due to the very short period of time between being informed of the Rotary project and it actually taking place, it was only because I was so openly welcomed by the ISRC that I was able to be involved at all. As such, it could be said that my being a ‘Rotaractor’ positioned me as an ‘insider’ with the participants, greatly facilitating the success of my thesis.
However, as argued by Nast (1994), this ‘insiderness’ is never complete. Being always positioned in innumerable fields simultaneously—delineated by age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.—we are instead forever in a state of ‘betweenness’. That is, “we are never ‘outsiders’ or ‘insiders’ in any absolute sense” (Nast 1994: 57). Further, as England (1994: 87) suggested, “this ‘betweenness’ is shaped by the researcher’s biography, which filters the ‘data’ and our perceptions and interpretations of the fieldwork experience.” This is not, however, something to be necessarily lamented. Instead, by accepting this betweenness, we may begin to explore both the ways in which positionalities can both limit and enhance the research.

For a second simple example, an obvious and explicitly recurring point of difference between the participants and myself was my age, which considerably affected how I was treated during the time in the Philippines. Being 30-60 years younger than the rest of the team\(^\text{10}\), at times an almost parental relationship emerged. As noted in my research journal, at one point I left the hotel to explore the Filipino city of Bacolod unaccompanied. Upon return, a number of participants expressed serious concern and distress about having done so, and urged me to not do so again – regardless of the fact that other participants frequently ventured out alone.

Lastly, as well as my positionality affecting the project in complex and subtle ways, I was myself affected by the project (Dowling 2010; Waitt 2010). As Dowling (2010: 37) suggested, “intersubjectivity also means that neither you, your participants, nor the nature of your interactions will remain unchanged during the research project.” Thus, the research process altered ‘who I am’, including both my worldviews and knowledges. For example, although joining the volunteer group with certain ideas about Rotary, the Philippines, volunteering, poverty, etc., the month of fieldwork altered what I knew and felt about these things. My knowledge of the Philippines was very limited pre-trip, comprised of broad brushstrokes of colonial histories and geographical imaginations of tropical beaches. However, after spending a month there,

\(^{10}\) I was 25 years old at the time of the volunteer project.
working and making friends with Filipinos, I gradually developed a highly personal, nuanced, and felt connection to the people and places I visited. Further, my understanding of the complexity and heterogeneity of Filipino cultures was greatly enhanced.

In summing up this section, the research process is here understood unavoidably relational, dialogical, and symbiotically sustaining. Both research and researcher were mutually affected throughout the process, and this was evident in the current study.

3.3 Ethics in Research

The aim of this section is to explore ethics in research. Ethical considerations in qualitative, ethnographic research are complex. Consequently, various strategies were employed to ensure ethical rigour. These can be divided into two main categories: ‘formal’, which included premeditated, procedural ethical guidelines and requirements, approved by the UOW Ethics Committee; and ‘informal’, which were unprescribed and ongoing ethical negotiations in the field. These informal strategies are guided by a feminist ethic, which emphasises the importance of continual researcher reflexivity. The strategies for both formal and informal ethics will now be discussed, including relevant tourism and broader ethnographic literature.

3.3.1 Formal Ethical Strategies

Institutionalised research ethics are vital in maintaining participant safety (Dowling 2010). Before conducting any data collection, the current project required ethical approval by the UOW Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval no. HE12/488 – see Appendix A). The ethics committee is informed by a very strict set of formalised guidelines, produced to protect participants from harm. Due to the project aims, participants were placed in a position of potential harm by the
processes of gathering personal information in the form of interviews, observations, photographs, and ‘travel diaries’. Key ethical issues therefore included: privacy and confidentiality, consent, transparency of recorded data, burden of time, and potential harm caused by emotional experiences. ‘Participant Information Sheets’ (PIS – see Appendix B) described the project purpose, what was required of participants, how data would be used, and their rights within the project. PISs were given to participants at least two weeks before consenting to the project and the commencement of data collection (Appendix C – Consent Form). Participants’ understanding of the project aim was verbally (re)confirmed—including any questions they may have had—before accepting their consent. Confidentiality was kept at all times during the project through use of participant pseudonyms and careful handling of all data. Data collected, including interview transcripts, were made available to participants for comment, retraction, or amendment. Burden of time was kept to a minimum by integrating the project into volunteer team meetings as much as possible, and returning travel diaries to participants. And, lastly, potential harm caused by strong emotional responses during the research process was addressed by informing participants of their right to cease the interview at any stage and having phone numbers for professional advice at hand at all times.

3.3.2 Informal Ethical Strategies

However, although valuable, these formalised strategies are guided by just one, relatively static understanding of ethics (Dowling 2010). As Reeves (2007: 257) suggested, there is also a need for the researcher “to adopt a reflexive attitude and to be able to resolve conflicts and dilemmas which may occur at any stage of the research process, not just in an abstract way at the beginning.” If ethics is treated as simply an institutional issue, there is a “danger that the rubber stamp of an ethical committee [will] both bureaucratize ethical reflection and also lull us into forgetting the need to take responsibility for thinking ethically on a day-to-day basis” (Valentine 2005: 485). As discussed in Chapter 2, this project was
Thus also guided by a feminist ‘ethics of care’, which emphasises ethics as an ongoing and relational process requiring continual critical reflexivity.

3.3.3 The Feminist ‘Ethics of Care’

Drawing on Foucault’s notion of ethics as care of the self, the feminist ‘ethics of care’ recognises “our common vulnerability and dependence upon others” (Popke 2006: 507). Here, ethics are understood as being embodied and relational, permeated with both affect and emotion (Popke 2006: 505). Acknowledging this all-encompassing interdependence, then, it is through extending relations of care that in situ, ethical conduct is navigated. In this sense, caring, as suggested by Popke (2006: 506), “is a shared accomplishment,” and “is not so much an activity as an attitude or orientation, a way of relating to others characterized by values of compassion and a ‘normative concern for inclusion’.” Moreover, as Popke (2006) also reminded us, this extends beyond the human to also include non-human actants. Consequently, ongoing, ethical reflexivity is the central method in ensuring the extension of relations of care throughout the research process. The use of this ethic in the current study will be illustrated through two examples.

The feminist ethics of care is highly relevant to ethnographic research. In a study relating to young fathers, for example, Reeves (2007: 258) found there was often a conflict between “having to choose between pursing a story about an intimate issue and protecting participants from the upsetting memories or emotions the incident raised for them.” This was further complicated when her own emotional and personal biography surfaced. Similar situations arose in collecting data for the current project. At one point in a follow-up interview, for example, Alan—the team manager—was recounting a meeting he had during his time in the Philippines. As I noted in my research diary: “In the middle of the interview, Alan became quite emotional as he spoke, and tears rolled from his eyes. However, his voice did not falter” (research diary, 20/3/2013). There was an ambiguity in the situation, leaving me unsure of the significance of the tears. Although I had made
it clear before starting the interview that Alan was free to stop the interview at any point, I realised that I had to remain aware of the ethics of letting the interview continue. I experienced both a cognitive and embodied tension between extending an ethics of care towards the participant and fulfilling my role as a researcher, who wanted to gather rich qualitative data. Ultimately, I decided to allow it to continue, and Alan completed the interview without visible distress.

Second, as fieldwork on volunteer tourism generally involves joining a team of volunteers, the creation of intimate bonds between researcher and participant are common (Barbieri et al. 2011; Conran 2011). As both Conran (2011) Barbieri et al. (2011) found in their respective studies on voluntourism, this can create a tension between navigating their role as ‘researcher’ and their role as ‘friend’, which can have implications on consent, confidentiality, and interpersonal relationships. As Conran (2011: 1458) noted: “participants could not easily navigate her [Conran’s] multiple positionalities including her often undefined role as a tourism researcher.” Likewise, after spending a month in the Philippines with the other volunteers, a close bond had developed. I was no longer merely ‘researcher’ or ‘observer’, but also friend. This was highlighted when James, discussing the friendships formed during the trip, said to me in a follow-up interview: “Be nice if I could still say g’day to you in twenty years time, and meet all your kids.” Here, it is clear that I could not claim with any integrity to be impartial observer within the research process. Instead, my role had extended to one of ‘friend’, with all of its accompanying responsibilities and ethical duties.

As this section has shown, both formal and informal strategies were employed in the research process. Formal strategies were addressed through abiding by the guidelines set down by the UOW Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). Additionally, however, a feminist ‘ethic of care’ was employed to sustain ongoing ethical negotiations in the field. These strategies acknowledged the relational, embodied aspects of in situ ethical negotiations, and were continually drawn upon throughout the research process.
3.4 Participant Recruitment and Sampling

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, the participant recruitment process will be outlined. And, second, the characteristics of the sample will be described.

3.4.1 The Recruitment Process

For this study, participants were recruited through purposive sampling, involving elements of stratified and opportunistic sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is the most prominent qualitative sampling technique (Baxter & Eyles 1997), and involves the intentional selection of a subgroup within a population, based on characteristics of research interest. Purposive sampling is largely non-representative, instead “stress[ing] the search for ‘information-rich cases’” (Baxter & Eyles 1997: 513). The final process by which participants were obtained for the current study will now be outlined.

As mentioned above, after an incidental meeting with the 2012 president of Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club (ISRC)—who initially informed me of their club’s work in the Philippines—I was put in contact with Rotarian and project manager, Alan. Subsequently, Alan and I met in person, and the history and structure of the project was discussed. Being a member of the Illawarra Rotaract Club (IRC), Alan and the ISRC were very welcoming in allowing me to join the 2013 volunteer team. At one of the team meetings prior to the commencement of the project (of which there were several that I attended), Alan invited me to address the team. Here, I offered an initial invitation to be part of the current research project. The aims and composition of the research project were explained. From there, participant contact details were obtained, and thirteen of the total eighteen team members indicated interest in participating in the project.
3.4.2 The Sample

As noted by Baxter and Eyles (1997: 153), the credibility of feminist research “need not be threatened by low sample sizes.” However, they continue, rationale should be still provided in justifying the final sample. In the case of the current thesis, the final sample of six was influenced by three primary factors. First, the aim of the project was to explore individual voluntourist experiences. In this case, this involved the use of information-rich, or ‘thick’ data. Consequently, it was determined that the most effective way of addressing the aims was through looking—in very close detail—at a small sample of participants. Second, as with any research project, there were the inevitable restraints of both time and money. Due to the restricted nature of the honours thesis, there was only a very limited amount of time and resources available to investigate the research aims. As such, the final sample was deemed an appropriate size in the context of an honours thesis. Third, to be eligible to participate in the study, participants were required to fulfil the following criteria. First, participants were required to be volunteering in the 2013 ISRC project to the Philippines. Second, as the project is interested in specifically older voluntourists, participants needed to be over fifty years of age. Third, they were required to express verbal and written consent to have ethnographic data used in the presentation of this thesis, as well as any related academic activities.

While thirteen of the total eighteen team members originally consented to participate, the thesis focused on the lived experiences of six. This focus reflects a division of volunteer labour between the ‘build’ and ‘vaccination’ teams discussed in the introduction. Tellingly, the build team was comprised primarily of retired Anglo-Australian men. The mean age of the build team rested somewhere approaching seventy years of age. In comparison, excluding Dawn, the vaccination team was comprised mainly of comparably younger Filipino-Australian women. This team also included two men—spouses of women in the

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11 Another influencing factor here was the final data collected. All volunteers in the build team participated in at least two stages of the methodology, including interviews and solicited travel diaries. This resulted in the project collecting more ethnographic data on these participants. See Appendix D for a table that displays the stages of the project that each volunteer participated in.
team—and a daughter of one of the women. The vaccination team were almost all trained medical and working professionals. A participant attribute table—outlining major demographic characteristics—is presented below (see Table 3.1).

As the table shows, excluding Rod, the majority of those on the build team had sustained involvement in the project for multiple years, with most having 6-8 years’ involvement. Again excluding Rod, the build team was comprised of members of the Church of Christ, suggesting the project may be complicated by discourses and practices of Christianity.

Finally, the history of the project and its participants places it in a unique position within existing literature on voluntourism. As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of academic research on voluntourism has focussed on single occasion programs involving younger volunteers. However, the Philippines project is ongoing. This means most participants are not heading to an unknown location, but instead have likely developed long-term relationships with both Filipino people and places across the span of their involvement. In this sense, the thesis sits apart from the current body of academic literature. Attention will now turn to the three-prong approach to collecting ethnographic material from the six resulting participants.
Table 2: Participant attributes (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Rotarian</th>
<th># Years in Project (2013 inc.)</th>
<th>Project Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan (Team Leader)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mid-70s</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid-70s</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Build/Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>De Facto</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary (Team Leader)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bus. Cons.</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Build/Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late 50s</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Catholic Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Catholic Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Catholic Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Catholic Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Late 50s</td>
<td>Fil/Aust</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Catholic Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vacc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Participant Observation

The aim of this section is to justify the use of participant observation as a means of providing insights into the practices, experiences, and sets of ideas participants drew upon to make sense of volunteering. The following discussion is broken into three threads. First, the broader literature on the use of participant observation in ethnographic research is outlined. Second, the application of participant observation within the current study is explored. And, last, the ways in which participant observation enriched the current project is discussed.

3.5.1 Participant Observation in Qualitative Research

As Nairn (2002: 150) pointed out, feminist theorists have “critique[d] disembodied researchers who are absent from their research.” Subsequently, feminist researchers endeavour to develop methodologies that allow access to ‘embodied knowledges’. Further, Kearns (2010: 245) suggested that developing a “geography of everyday experience” requires moving beyond more contained and formalised methodologies, such as interviews and surveys. Participant observation is one way to achieve this.

Hume and Mulcock (2012) described participant observation as the ethnographer’s core methodology, which involves “a conscious and systematic sharing, in so far as circumstances permit, in the life-activities and, on occasion, in the interests and affects of a group of persons” (Kluckhohn 1940: 331). As Kearns suggested, this means “engaging with participants (not ‘respondents’) and at least partially participating in their life worlds” (2010: 242 – italics in original). Subsequently, participant observation is often conceptualised as a tool that allows researchers to unravel the discursive and embodied relationships that produce space (Kearns 2010). In this way, participant observation offers access to lived, embodied experiences of voluntourists through the researcher.
Kearns (2010: 242) stated that there are three primary purposes for using participant observation: counting, complementing, and contextualising. In this study, participant observation was drawn upon for the latter two purposes. First, taking part in the volunteer project allowed access to information that “complements the aggregated data gathered by more structured means and assists in interpreting the experience of place” (Kearns 2010: 242). And, second, participant observation allowed for opportunities “to construct an in-depth interpretation of a particular time and place through direct experience” (Kearns 2010: 242). The ways in which this method was employed in practice, and how it enriched the project, will now be discussed.

3.5.2 Participant Observation in Practice

Participant observation is best understood as a collection of ethnographic methodologies centred on observing individuals or groups (Winchester & Rofe 2010). As Kearns (2010: 245) suggested, far from being a standardised methodology, “the success of the approach depends [...] more upon introspection on the part of the researcher with respect to his or her relationship to what [...] is being researched.” As such, it is important to acknowledge the diverse ways in which participant observation can be ‘done’, and the benefits and limitations of each. In this project, participant observation took a particular form, which will now be described.

Following Gold (1958), Kearns (2010: 246) outlined four types of participant observation: (1.) complete observer; (2.) observer-as-participant; (3.) participant-as-observer; and, (4.) complete participation. Using this model, by becoming a full-fledged member of the volunteer group, I primarily drew on the latter two forms. Observation was ‘overt’, as all participants were informed of my co-role as researcher. Some voluntourism researchers highlight concerns about the use of overt observation, specifically the ‘observation effect’. Consequently, both Barbieri et al. (2011) and Tomazos and Butler (2012) opted for covert observation techniques in their respective projects on voluntourism.
However, feminist research—rather than engaging in the debate about covert and overt methods—demands acknowledging research as being inevitably a co-creation between researcher and research. Regardless of whether the project design is overt or covert, the relationship is always mutually sustaining and affecting (Dowling 2010: 37). To maintain methodological rigour, therefore, researcher reflexivity was critical in the participant observation component of the project (Dowling 2010; Winchester & Rofe 2010).

Recording observations in the field attracts particular obstacles (Kearns 2010: 254). In this project, observations were recorded in both a written research journal and through photographs (Dowling 2010). These included planned and spontaneous events, conversations, feelings, and reflections. However, as other participant observers also found, taking notes in situ was often not practical while volunteering (Tomazos & Butler 2012). Consequently, “there [was] a greater reliance on recollection and a need to work on detailed note-taking after a period of field encounters” (Kearns 2010: 254). Thus, often limited notes were taken in the daytime, and required reflecting on the details of events in the evening. However, my felt, physical exhaustion that frequently followed a long day of volunteer labour, travelling, and socialising, complicated this process further. Writing up field notes often felt like a chore, and maintaining momentum for this task was a continuous personal challenge during the project.

In drawing on the notes taken during participation as ‘data’, this thesis follows Tomazos and Butler’s (2012: 181) work on voluntourism in Mexico:

All research diary excerpts from the field study were treated in the same way as ‘participant quotes’ because they were derived from the researcher’s written notes and they are an integral part of the author’s ‘stream of consciousness’ based on his feelings, observations, deductions and reflections and thus valid to be used as research data.
Thus, the field notes of participant observations were included within the final data set and subject to analysis, alongside interview transcripts and solicited diaries.

3.5.3 Participant Observation in the Philippines Project

In the current study, participant observation enriched the project in two primary ways. First, through joining voluntourists in their lived experiences of volunteering in the Philippines—including participating in their volunteer labour, dining, celebrating, daily debriefing, touristing, etc.—I was able to gain nuanced understandings of the complexity of the project and the embodied experiences therein. Instead of depending solely on participant recollection—which is inevitably incomplete (and sometimes purposely so)—I was able to partake in the project itself and record my observations. Further, I was able to become part of the spontaneity of everyday voluntourist interactions (Kearns 2010). This offered me access to both the discursive and embodied knowledges sustained throughout the project. Further, this consequently enabled me to situate the practices, discourses, and embodied knowledges participants drew upon in making sense of their voluntourist experiences.

Second, far from being an absent or mythologised ‘neutral observer’, participating in the project allowed me to form intimate relationships of trust with the volunteer group. Voluntourist experiences became shared experiences, where I exchanged intimate and affective relations of joys, frustrations, excitements, and disappointments. The shared voluntourist experience greatly altered the affective relationship between myself and the other members of the group, highlighted in James’ statement (discussed previously) where he expressed a desire to sustain our friendship into the distant future. As this shows: “My corporeality within the observed arena of social interaction thus rendered binary constructs of researcher/researched and subject/object thoroughly permeable” (Kearns 2010: 254). Sharing intimate experiences in the context of voluntourism has the capacity to alter the discursive and affective
relations between bodies. In this case, this sharing appeared to foster an openness between myself and the group which was absent before the trip (see Winchester & Rofe 2010; Vodopivec & Jaffe 2011). The building of good rapport facilitated extremely ‘thick’ and ‘rich’ follow-up interviews with participants, with participants being much more open in subsequent interviews. Thus participant observation resonated with the conceptual framework and helped address the project aims. The second methodological tool of data collection—solicited ‘travel diaries’—will now be discussed.

3.6 The Solicited Travel Diary

In this thesis, the primary purpose of the solicited ‘travel diary’ was to provide a written record of the events of each day during the voluntourist project. The aim of this section is to justify the use of the travel diary and outline the ways in which its use enriched the project. Thus, the discussion is divided into two threads. First, a brief literature review is given on the use, benefits, and limitations of diary methods. And, second, a justification is provided for the use of solicited ‘travel diaries’ in the current project.

3.6.1 Solicited Diaries in Qualitative Research

Diaries are gaining popularity in geography—particularly solicited diaries—which can be used to record the seemingly mundane events of everyday life. As a temporal and portable methodological tool, diaries offer opportunities for participants to record contextualised, in situ accounts of their everyday experiences. Solicited diaries are differentiated from personal diaries in their purposive production. As Bell (1998: 72) noted, solicited diaries are “an account produced specifically at the researcher’s request, by an informant or informants.” That is, they are generated “in the full knowledge that the writing process is for external consumption” (Meth 2003: 196). As such, they are best understood as a joint creation between the researcher and researched, where
the resulting data is formed through an ongoing negotiation between the parties involved.

Solicited diaries may be understood as one response to Nigel Thrift’s critique of “human geography’s methodological conservatism” (discussed in Latham 2003: 1994). Researchers are looking beyond canonical methodological tools in exploring the complexities of everyday experience. Furthermore, some geographers are drawing on various ‘diary methods’ in response to the call by Latham (2003: 1999) to develop “new ways to approach studying [...] the everyday in ways that actively engage embodiments of social practice.” Everyday life, according to Latham (2003: 1996), is one of “the great frontiers of contemporary human geography,” and is “a key realm where social power is exercised and maintained, and the everyday simultaneously opens-up new realms of resistance to mainstream networks of power/knowledge” (Latham 2003: 1997). Subsequently, geographers have drawn on solicited diaries in exploring the everyday operations of power and intimate everyday experiences (Harvey 2011: 666). Solicited diaries that explore everyday operations of power are produced through a variety of mediums, such as written (Coghlan & Gooch 2011), audio (Waitt & Duffy 2010), photographic (Bissell 2009), and video (Holliday 2004).

Often, solicited diary methods are married with interview methods. Here, researchers largely followed the early work of Zimmerman and Wielder (1977) who pioneered the ‘diary, diary interview method’. This is “where researchers and participants discuss the content of solicited diaries, enabling researchers to ask questions and explore the events recorded in greater depth” (Harvey 2011: 666). These follow-up interviews allow for the elaboration, clarification, and verification of themes arising in diaries, facilitating research rigour and credibility. In their paper on chronic health problems and older adults, for example, Jacelon and Imperio (2005: 991) found that “solicited diaries, when combined with an initial and follow-up interview, provided a rich source of data about day-to-day activities of participants.” Meth (2003: 200) argued that this combination of methods “accommodates for different response modes on the
part of the respondents”, as “different respondents will engage more fully [...] with different research methods than others.” For the above reasons, Meth (2003) strongly recommends using diary methods as part of a multiple method approach to social research projects.

Meth (2003) also argued that solicited diary methods align well with feminist aims. More specifically, the three feminist principles of ‘giving voice’ to participants’ everyday experiences, encouraging reflexivity, and “empowerment are well served by using solicited diaries” (Meth 2003: 196). The first feminist aim is illustrated by Bijoux and Myers (2006). They emphasised the capacity of diary methods in recording and “validat[ing] knowledge accrued through embodied and emotional perception, performance and practice and can help to deconstruct and understand the dialectic between sensuous experience and place” (Bijoux & Myers 2006: 59). Thus solicited diaries are a useful tool in accessing the felt and emotional, as well as tracing the influence of non-cognitive or sub-conscious aspects of everyday experience.

As a second feminist aim, researchers note the capacity of solicited diaries in empowering participants through encouraging active participation within the research process (Meth 2003). As stated above, solicited diaries are inevitably a joint production, with participants being given more democratic control over the research outcomes than more conventional ethnographic methods, such as interviews and participant observation. In her study on women’s experiences of violence in South Africa, for example, Meth (2003: 196) found that solicited diaries “offer[ed] the opportunity for respondents to define the boundaries of their shared knowledge,” and promoted a “more empowering relationship between the researched and the researcher.” This empowerment can be extended through various forms of ‘participant checking’, such as follow-up interviews, as discussed in more detail below.

Lastly, the transformative potential of diary methods is noted by researchers. This can be linked to feminism’s commitment to social justice (Meth 2003: 196). In her paper on heterosex condom use, for example, Harvey (2011) found diary
methods encouraged participants to become more reflexive of their sexual practices, with subsequent behaviour change. Similarly, Coghlan and Gooch (2011) found that the use of writing methods in their study encouraged transformative learning within voluntourists. As the above research demonstrates, diary methods offer flexible techniques in which to access the discursive, performative, and embodied aspects of everyday experience. Further, diary methods align well with feminist principles, emphasising the everyday, while empowering participants and encouraging reflexivity.

However, researchers note three primary limitations in using solicited diaries in research. First, participants must have the skills to be able to participate. In her study on women’s experiences of violence in South Africa, for example, Meth (2003) found that several women did not have adequate literacy to use a written diary. In response, she made available audio and scribing options, which despite having their own limitations largely circumvented this issue. Further, there was a difficulty in conveying and instructing what was actually required from participants. Due to the absence of a pre-existing diary writing culture among her participants, Meth (2003) found diaries were often ‘incorrectly’ filled. Similarly, participants often lack the skills to write about the ‘everyday’ because of its seeming mundanity. Second, Meth (2003) also suggested that, contrary to the statement above: “The personal diary runs the risk of providing decontextualized and individualistic material” (Meth 2003: 1999). However, like all methodological tools, this can largely be managed through rigorous and reflexive methodological design. And, third, diary methods often require significant commitment of time and effort from participants (Meth 2003). This may subsequently lead to participant dissuasion or drop-out. Thus, diary methods need to be designed with this in mind, so as not overburden participants.
3.6.2 Solicited Travel Diaries in the Philippines Project

In the current project, solicited travel diaries were an appropriate tool in providing insights into the participants’ practices, experiences, and embodied knowledges of voluntourism. Following Meth (2003: 197), the diaries were “simple A5 sized stapled lined booklets which had a page of guidelines pasted into the front cover.” The instructions explained that the purpose of the dairy was to “try to better understand the experiences and practices of volunteer travel” (see Appendix E). Participants were asked to record both the ‘exceptional’ moments (such as joys and frustrations) as well as the more ‘mundane’ or everyday moments (such as hygiene and transport practices). While each page offered a guide in prompting the scribing of ‘exceptional’ and ‘everyday’ moments, participants were encouraged to use the diary in creative ways (see Latham 2003).

In terms of addressing the limitations of using diary methods, there was no concern of literacy being a barrier in volunteers participating – with all participants being functionally literate. Further, as Jacelon and Imperio (2005) suggested, the optimal timeline for diary methods is one to two weeks. Less time, they argued, is insufficient for obtaining rich data, while more runs the risk of overburdening participants. As such, the current project falls within this optimal time period, with the project lasting a total of two weeks. Additionally, travel diaries were not seen as pressing too much of an onus on participants, as there is a strong Western tradition of keeping travel diaries, and participants were offered to have them returned upon completion of analysis so as to have a personal record of their trip.

The results of the travel diaries varied drastically. Some participants, including Rod, Martin, and Mark, filled them out daily, keeping relatively detailed accounts of their activities. Interestingly, Dawn and Alan decided to share a single diary, meaning the author of the text and the perspective was often left unclear. James expressed dissatisfaction with his diary, and instead typed up an extended account of his experiences of the project once he returned to Wollongong.
Finally, participants largely kept their accounts focussed on the material practices of their daily activities, rather than reflexive accounts of their experiences. Despite this, however, Rod, Mark, and the Dawn-Alan combination recorded a number of particularly emotional experiences.

The returned travel diaries were used for a number of purposes. First, as argued above, they gave access to the everyday experiences of participants, including the embodied and affective aspects. As such, they provided rich sources of data in themselves, which were used for later analysis. Second, however, as part of a mix-methods approach, the use of diaries approximated Zimmerman and Weilder's (1977) ‘diary, diary interview method’, outlined above. In follow-up interviews, the diaries were used as talking points where participants were prompted to return to scenes sketched in the diaries and clarify and expand upon these moments. As the diaries specified the importance of ‘mundane’ experiences (as well as the ‘exceptional’), aspects of the project that may have been forgotten or overlooked in retrospect were potentially recorded and made available for subsequent discussion. Thus, solicited travel diaries were used in diverse ways, enriching and adding rigour to the project. Attention will now turn to the third qualitative data tool, semi-structured interviews.

3.7 Semi-Structured Interviews

The aim of this section is to justify the use of semi-structured interviews to explore the sets of ideas and experiences of people who participate in voluntourism. The section is divided into two threads. First, the use of interviews in qualitative research is explored. And, second, the use of semi-structured interviews in the current study is outlined.
3.7.1 Interviews in Qualitative Research

Interviews are a fundamental method in qualitative geographical research. However, as Dunn (2010: 101) suggested: “Interviewing in geography is more than ‘having a chat’.” Rather, interviewing can be conceptualised as an eclectic collection of methodologies that run along a continuum from ‘informal’ to ‘formal’, or ‘unstructured’ to ‘structured’ forms (Hesse-Biber 2007). In the current study, specifically semi-structured interviews were used to explore the experiences and discourses of participants.

Following Dunn (2010: 110): “The semi-structured interview is organized around ordered but flexible questioning.” That is, although the interviewer may draw on a prepared ‘interview schedule’ that outlines key themes of interest, questions may be reformulated or new directions taken as the interview progresses and both researcher and participant jointly explore the research topic. In contrast to more structured interview forms, the “path of the conversation between researcher and participant is not pre-determined, nor is the spontaneity inherent in the flow of the conversation truncated” (Al-Hindi & Kawabata 2002: 106). This dynamic and fluid framework allows the participant freedom to speak in their own words, rather than those of the researcher. In this sense, semi-structured interviewing asks researchers to “give up some control” (Al-Hindi & Kawabata 2002: 114) of the interview, meaning the method aligns well with feminist principles of empowerment and care.

With this in mind, three main aspects of semi-structured interviews will now be discussed, including: the richness of interview data, the significance of power relations in interviewing, and the significance of researcher-participant rapport in interviews.

As a qualitative method, interviews provide an extremely rich source of ‘thick evidence’ of the lived experiences of participants (Herod 1993). As DeVault and Gross (2012: 184) suggested, “narratives are fundamental to identity and to the ways that people make sense of their worlds.” Thus, through interviews,
researchers are able to explore the myriad discourses and narratives participants draw upon to explain their practices and experiences. Further, interview data can potentially allow researchers access to the non- or pre-cognitive, affective and embodied aspects of everyday experience. Conceptualising bodily affects as “performative emotions that enable people to know and shape relationships with other human body-selves, as well as non-human entities,” Waitt and Frazer (2012: 327) found that participants articulated the affective, ephemeral, and corporeal experiences of surfing by identifying and naming them through the metaphors of the ‘vibe’ and ‘glide’. Although debated within affective geographies\(^\text{12}\), this approach argues that interview data allows researcher access both into and beyond the discursive aspects of everyday experience.

Feminist researchers endeavour to conceptualise the semi-structured interview as a co-constructed between interviewer and participant (Hesse-Biber 2007; Waitt 2010). Understood in this way, the interviewer becomes an instrument of research, complicit in the generation of narrative data (Al-Hindi & Kawabata 2002). Again, the myth of researcher neutrality and objectivity is here debunked. Instead, the interview process becomes a product of the personal and embodied histories of both participant and interviewer.

In this vein, feminist researchers are especially interested in the ways in which dynamic power relations unfold throughout the interview process (Herod 1993; Hesse-Biber 2007). In particular, there is interest in how both social categories and researcher-participant corporealities coalesce to produce and sustain interview spaces. Looking specifically at the influence of gender on the interview process, Herod (1993: 306) argued: “Interviewing as a research practice cannot be conceived as taking place in a gender vacuum.” Instead, gendered bodies are inevitably and inextricably implicated in the research process, affecting and shaping the research at every turn. Both parties engage in an ongoing negotiation and (re)production of their subjectivities at the intersections

\(^{12}\) For excellent summaries of the ‘affect debate’ in geography, see Pile (2010) and Pile (2011).

However, as Herod (1993: 314) also suggested, "Recognizing that gender relations influence the storytelling process is not to abandon scientific concerns for validity." Again, ongoing researcher reflexivity is widely regarded as the most efficacious method in contextualising the co-construction of meaning in interview methods (Al-Hindi & Kawabata 2002; Hesse-Biber 2007; Reeves 2007). By remaining alert and aware of the complex, myriad ways in which researchers are entwined within the research process—and subsequently “writing ourselves into the research process” (Herod 1993: 314)—Herod (1993: 314) argued: “we can critically reflect upon how our participation may have structured a particular interview.” Ongoing researcher reflexivity is, therefore, key to maintaining the alertness and sensitivity susceptive in producing rich, useful interview data. This includes picking up on bodily as well as verbal cues, maintaining a “critical inner dialogue” (Dunn 2010: 116), and “constantly analyz[ing] what is being said and simultaneously formulate the next question or prompt” (Dunn 2010: 116). This reflexivity also allows researchers to become sensitive to the moments in which power is being exploited, and subsequently aids in maintaining and extending the ‘feminist ethic of care’ throughout the interview process. Consequently, Reeves (2007) suggested that researcher reflexivity in interviews is not just good practice, but a moral obligation.

Finally, DeVault and Gross (2012) discussed the semi-structured interview as a ‘collaborative encounter’. When the transcript of a semi-structured interview is conceptualised in this way, researcher-participant rapport becomes key in producing rich and meaningful interview data. Semi-structured interviews, by definition, should be left open to the spontaneity of the dialogical researcher-participant relationship. As Dunn suggested, “If you and your informant are at ease with each other, then the informant is likely to be communicative” (Dunn 2010: 113). Thus, developing relationships susceptive to openness and mutual communicability is vital.
Semi-structured interviews were used extensively in the current study. In-depth, semi-structured interviewing comprised both Stage One (which occurred before the volunteering project) and Stage Three (which occurred once participants had returned from the Philippines). All interviews took place in the participants’ homes. Using both Dunn’s (2010) and Hesse-Biber’s (2007) useful texts on preparing for effective interviews, pre-trip interviews aimed to explore participants’ volunteering, travelling, and life narratives. The interview was divided into three sections, exploring the themes of participant lifecourse, motivations for volunteering, and volunteering in the Philippines (see Appendix F). In total, six participants took part in these initial, pre-trip interviews, which lasted from between 30 minutes and an hour in length (see Appendix D).

Follow-up interviews occurred once participants had returned from the Philippines. These interviews were informed by the initial interview data collected in Stage One, as well as the ethnographic material collected in Stage Two, which included participant travel diaries, researcher and participant photos, and researcher’s in-field observations. Follow-up interviews focused on obtaining the participants’ reflexive accounts of their volunteering experiences. Questions centred around four main themes: the sites of volunteer tourism (the ‘build’ site, the hotel, the village, tourist spaces, etc.); the ‘challenges and rewards’ of volunteer tourism experiences; the ‘emotional labour’ of volunteer tourism; and the perceived impact these experiences had on participants (see Appendix G). Again, a total of six participants took part in these interviews, which lasted from between 50 minutes and one and a half hours in length (see Appendix D).

Previously collected materials were used in three primary ways in follow-up interviews. First, photographs—both those taken by myself and those taken by participants—were periodically used as props and prompts. Kearns (2010: 244) refers to this technique as ‘photovoice’, arguing that, “once printed, the photographs serve as catalysts for discussion, which in turn is recorded and
interpreted.” In these interviews, photos became useful launching points for engaging in discussions around the various sites staged for participants’ voluntary labour. Second, entries from participant travel diaries became talking points for participants to clarify and discuss. This technique—originally developed by Zimmerman and Wielder (1977), and discussed above—aids methodological rigour and credibility, allowing participants to help interpret, amend, and expand their travel diary entries through ‘participant checking’. In this project, excerpts from travel diaries became entry points in talking about the everyday activities of participants, which may have otherwise been overlooked. Third, researcher in-field observations of each participant—recorded in a research diary—also became points of interest to explore. Interviews provided opportunities to check and collaborate any in-field observations. Lastly, throughout both sets of interviews, a research journal was kept. After meeting with each participant, detailed notes were taken, recording a reflexive account of the research process. Here, Dowling’s (2010) useful guide in maintaining both reflexivity and a research journal was drawn upon.

In sum, a mixed methods approach—including participant observation, solicited travel diaries, and semi-structured interviews—was employed to address the research aims. Each method enriched the project in different ways, and contributed toward research triangulation and methodological rigour. The final section of this chapter explores the analytical tools deployed in interpreting the collected materials.

3.8 Analysing Data with Narrative Ethnography

Following Waitt and Frazer (2012), who drew upon the work of Gubrium and Holstein (2009), ‘narrative ethnography’ was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. Including elements of both discourse and narrative analysis, narrative ethnography is here employed to “interpret [voluntourists’] stories not as ‘factual truth accounts’ nor for linguistic content, but as phenomenological-interactions constitutive of embodied socio-cultural worlds” (Waitt & Frazer 2012: 333). That is, while also looking to identify the sets of ‘common sense
truths’ drawn upon in making sense of their volunteering experiences, and situating these within participants’ biographies and narratives, narrative ethnography explores text for evidence of the embodied and affective aspects of everyday experience. Hence, this form of analysis seeks to explore both into and beyond discursive structures and participant narratives and delve into the corporeality of voluntourist experiences.

Qualitative geographers, following Foucault, have largely avoided developing and implementing systematic analytical methods (Waitt 2010). This is primarily for fear that formulaic ‘how tos’ may superimpose overly reductionist structures on techniques whose ostensible aims are to uncover the operation of unequal power relationships in producing effects of truth. However, as Crang (2005: 219) stated: “Analysing qualitative material is not an ineffable and mysterious process but neither is it a case of painting by numbers.” Instead, geographers have looked upon analysis as an ‘art’, following the maxim of ‘learn by doing’ (Waitt 2010: 219).

While noting this, the current study draws upon Crang’s (2005), Cope’s (2010), and Waitt’s (2010) useful guides in conducting qualitative analysis. This included maintaining reflexivity, familiarisation with text, and developing descriptive and analytical codes. Additionally, however, particular attention was paid to moments in which participants attempted to articulate embodied affects and emotions. As Waitt and Frazer (2012) demonstrated, through textual data, such as interviews, drawings, and solicited diaries, researchers can explore the felt aspects of everyday experience. Thus, narrative ethnography provides a useful tool in addressing the research aims.

Having outlined the methodology drawn upon in exploring the research aims, the resulting analysis will now be presented. The results are divided into three chapters. The three guiding research questions are addressed through each chapter. As per the methodology, we want to avoid assuming places as being somehow fixed or preconfigured. Instead, through drawing on the four-prong conceptual framework, each chapter examines how sites of voluntourism are
sustained through discursive webs, embodied encounters, performances, and ethical dilemmas. The first two chapters focus on the primary site of volunteer labour itself—Nayonbago—exploring, in turn, how participants sustained the village as a place of ‘need’ and ‘celebration’. The third focuses on the group’s hotel as ‘restorative’ space. I will now discuss the discourses, embodied encounters, and ethical dilemmas that sustain and rupture Nayonbago as a place of ‘need’.
Sustaining and Rupturing Nayonbago as a Place of ‘Need’

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationships and tensions that emerge within how participants talked about their motivations, experiences, and embodied practices of becoming a voluntourist while constituting Nayonbago as a place of need (see Figure 4.1). Thus, the chapter will address all three guiding research questions. Following feminist epistemology, social categories are not taken as immutably stable, such as ‘needy’, ‘helper’, ‘receiver’, or ‘giver’. Instead, they are tentatively and temporarily ‘fixed’ through the (re)production of discursive structures, encounters, and performances. However, in contrast, the vast majority of current voluntourism literature takes these for granted, working within fixed voluntourist categories.

Figure 4.1: Encounters with socio-economic disadvantage – the streets of Nayonbago. (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)
This chapter discusses two primary themes from the ethnographic materials. First, it illustrates how participants tapped into a number of normative discourses of socio-economic disadvantage documented in previous voluntourism research (Simpson 2004; Palacios 2010; Crossley 2012a, 2012b). To constitute Nayonbago as a place of need of voluntourism, participants drew on three sets of ideas: transforming poverty into an object of moral redemption, constructing impoverished communities as ‘poor-but-happy’, and simplistic development talk. This discussion provides examples of how such talk of a ‘needy’ Nayonbago appears to fix the binaries of developed/developing, materialism/idealism, volunteer/voluntoured, and needy/helpers.

Second, however, a close analysis of participant accounts reveals they were not simply reproducing but also troubling sets of ideas that operate to separate the voluntourist from the voluntoured. As will be shown, social borders are not only reconfigured but also ruptured by: first, the materiality of ageing bodies; second, ethical dilemmas; and, third, affective intensities and embodied personal histories triggered by encounters with socio-economic disadvantage.

4.2 (Re)Producing Normative Discourses of Socio-Economic Disadvantage

4.2.1 Poverty as an Object of Moral Redemption

Transforming poverty into an object of moral redemption relies upon an imagined geography underpinned by binary thinking of developed/developing. This reaffirms Australia and Australians as wealthy, and Nayonbago and its residents as needy. Both Simpson (2004) and Mostafanezhad’s (2012) work has shown how voluntourism has been implicit in the reproduction of a distinct ‘geography of need’, wherein voluntourists drew on simplistic socio-economic geographical binaries. For example, Martin, James, and Alan all positioned Nayonbago as a place of need through tapping into sets of ideas that help fashion all Australians as spoilt, millionaires, and selfish. Martin, aged 80, has been
involved with the project since 2008, and has a long history of volunteering with various Illawarra disability services. Long retired and unmarried, Martin's increasing health concerns have been a growing concern in his continued participation in the project. Below, he articulates Australians as greedy:

                Yeah, I think it [going to Nayonbago] helps us to see that. Because we've [Australians have] got everything and we still want more. (Martin, follow-up interview)

Similarly, James expressed an understanding of poverty where he was encouraged to reflect on his own position of relative wealth. This is James's second trip to the Philippines after being introduced to the project by Martin. Aged 60 and father of two adult children, James is recently retired and divorced. However, like Martin, he also has a history of volunteering with a number of Illawarra disability services:

                So, you know, all of these things [encountering inequality in Nayonbago] really challenge your belief. And you think, well, we've [Australians have] got everything here [in Australia]. Even the poorest of us is a millionaire in lifestyle in comparison to someone who's over there in the middle range. (James, follow-up interview)

In a similar vein, build Team Leader Alan understands Australians as both spoilt and selfish. Accompanied by his wife Dawn, Alan has been involved in and co-led the annual Philippines project since conception. His highly compassionate concern for addressing socio-economic inequalities is informed by at least three main biographical details: his self-identification as a 'war orphan', his devout Christian faith, and his and Dawn's highly disabled and dependent middle-aged son, David. Significantly, Alan works throughout the year organising and collecting funds for the project:

                Um, I think we're spoilt in our country [Australia], very much spoilt. And we have, we're not asking for needs in our country, we're asking for wants upon
wants. Right? We’re talking about need, here [in Nayonbago]. And that’s a big difference. And, um, it makes you wonder, are we becoming a very selfish nation? (Alan, aged 70, follow-up interview)

Imagining Nayonbago as a place of need relative to Australia works to eliminate the social inequalities that exist between different social groups within Australia. At the same time, as Vodopivek and Jaffe (2011: 123) suggested: “By constructing the beneficiaries as needy, volunteers construct their own identities as helpers.” Thus, imagining Nayonbago as a place of need relative to Australia helps to justify the presence, skills, funds, and labour of the overseas voluntourist. The reproduction of this geography of need works to fix binary social categories of ‘volunteer’/‘voluntoured’ and ‘needy’/‘helper’.

Similar to Crossley’s (2012a, 2012b) discussion of young voluntourists in rural Kenya, Martin, James, and Alan discursively transformed their experience of Nayonbago into a catalyst for the ‘appreciation’ of privilege. Nayonbago is sustained as place of need which encouraged participants to reflect on their relative wealth and the (un)sustainability of their lifestyles. Through spurring reflection on consumption, material privilege, and human rights, Nayonbago understood as a place of need is discursively sustained as an ‘object of moral redemption’ for the voluntourist. Additionally, considering the Philippines project’s close ties to Christianity—including the Wollongong Church of Christ, Habitat for Humanity, its mostly self-identified Christian team, and the Roman Catholic majority of the Philippines—it is interesting to note this discourse’s historical links to the religious tradition of ‘redemptive suffering’. Here, suffering is understood as necessary in transforming and transcending individuals into higher levels of moral being.

In summary, Martin, James, and Alan each tapped into and (re)produced Nayonbago as place of need through comparisons with Australia, sustained through a materialist/idealist dichotomy, and in doing so fashioned experiences of volunteering in this place in terms of moral redemption or betterment. This simultaneously worked to cement and justify participant categories as
'volunteers’ and ‘helpers’. As will now be discussed, one way the materialist/idealist dichotomy played out is in terms of how participants spoke about the people of Nayonbago as ‘poor-but-happy’.

### 4.2.2 Nayonbago Residents as Poor-But-Happy

Several participants, including Martin, Rod, and Dawn, tapped into what both Simpson (2004) and Crossley (2012a, 2012b) have termed the ‘poor-but-happy’ discourse:

> Well most people will observe going to a country where there's poverty and poor people, poverty doesn’t automatically go in with misery. They’re [people in Nayonbago are] often very happy people. (Martin, pre-trip interview)

Rod also seemed to be reproducing this same discourse. As a brief biographical note, first-time team member, Rod, has a background in engineering and environmental activism. Rod understands himself as an avid traveller and lover of ‘nature’ and the 'outdoors':

> Um, I do feel, I do feel, you know, I do feel sorry for all those little children [in Nayonbago – see Figure 4.2]. They're not feeling sorry for themselves, or they don't seem to be feeling sorry for themselves. [...] Those people are either happy, or else they're putting on a very, very, very good act, I thought. (Rod, aged 60, follow-up interview)

Similarly, Dawn expressed an understanding of Nayonbago residents as being happy in their impoverishment. As mentioned above, Dawn, along with her husband Alan, has been involved in the Philippines project from the very beginning. Beyond travelling to visit family and friends in the United Kingdom, the annual project is Dawn’s only overseas trip, and she often struggles to cope with the her encounters with socio-economic disadvantage in the Philippines:
They’re [Nayonbago residents are] happy, but we know they haven’t got very much. But, fortunately they, you know, they’re happy. (Dawn, aged 70, follow-up interview)

Seemingly, participants depict Nayonbago residents as contented in their material and social disadvantage. As discussed in Chapter 2, Crossley (2012a, 2012b) conceptualised the reproduction of this discourse as a ‘defensive response’ to poverty, which worked to distance it as an object. Following this, for the young participants in her studies, Crossley went on to argue that the discourse of the ‘poor-but-happy’ worked to allow for the guiltless maintenance of their affluent Western lifestyles. However, as will be discussed shortly, this distancing was not evident in the older participants of the current study.

Figure 4.2: The ‘poor-but happy’ – The happy, smiling faces of Nayonbago children. (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)
4.2.3 Simplistic Global Development Talk

The third discourse of socio-economic disadvantage participants tapped into related to their role as ‘helpers’. Both Dawn and Alan understood their roles as helpers as simply being a consequence of their advantaged material position relative to those living in Nayonbago, requiring no specific skills set. In this sense, they (re)produced normative binaries of ‘volunteer’/’voluntoured’ and ‘helper’/’needy’ – discursively ‘fixing’ these roles. Following Palacios (2010) and Simpson (2004), this suggests participants tapped into a specific form of simplistic global development talk:

We’ve got abundance here [in Australia]. Even though we’re not millionaires at all, we’ve always got food. So we can help. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

Because we [Australians] have the resources, we can go on holiday and enjoy ourselves, so surely we can have a holiday, enjoy their culture, as well as assist. (Alan, follow-up interview)

As long as you’ve got a good heart, good pair of hands and, you know, a few muscles, and you use your common intellect and common sense, you can be of a help. (Alan, follow-up interview)

Above, Alan and Dawn imply that the work of development—in particular, addressing socio-economic disadvantage—is something that can be ‘done’ by non-skilled, but enthusiastic and empathetic voluntourists.

Palacios (2010) and Simpson (2004) have critiqued the idea of voluntourists being ‘capable helpers’ by virtue of their superior material position. Palacios (2010) pointed to inequalities that may be sustained by people who tap into sets of ideas that discursively sustain volunteers as capable helpers. Palacios (2010: 867) wrote: “specific relations of power [...] are fostered between those perceived as ‘volunteers’ and ‘voluntoured’, between ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’.” In this way, potentially worrying cultural images of Western superiority may be
perpetuated. Similarly, through analysing the marketing materials of ‘gap year’ voluntourism operators, Simpson (2004) also found the purposeful reproduction of this simplistic global development discourse. More worryingly, by reproducing an inappropriate ‘volunteer language’ and incorrectly assigning volunteer roles, Palacios (2010: 862) argued that volunteer tourist programs “will potentially fall under the umbrella of ‘neo-colonialism’” – a widespread concern of tourism more broadly (see Raymond & Hall 2008).

However, although participants tapped into and reproduced the above three normative discourses of poverty, it did not appear that notions of Western superiority—or, indeed, neo-colonialism—were being perpetuated. Instead, the next section explores how participants were quite aware of their ambiguous positioning between roles of ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’, which arguably undermines notions of superiority. Similarly, participants appeared highly reflexive of the ethical dilemmas that permeated the voluntourism project. Thus, counter to the arguments advanced by Simpson (2004) and Crossley (2012a, 2012b) on young gap year voluntourists, while emphasising social difference within imagined geographies, participants did not reproduce social distance between volunteers and their poor-but-happy Others. To account for this difference, the next section explores three examples of voluntourist encounter: the materiality of the ageing body, ethical dilemmas, and affective responses to socio-economic disadvantage.

4.3 Troubling Normative Discourses: Ageing Bodies, Ethical Dilemmas, and Affective Intensities

4.3.1 The Materialities of Aged and Needy Bodies

First, the physical limitations of some participants’ aged bodies often prevented them from fully participating in the volunteer labour. Participants’ awareness of the specific limitations and needs of their aged bodies contradicted and ruptured
their ostensible roles as ‘helpers’. Thus, the essentialised categories of ‘givers’/‘receivers’ were troubled by the materiality of participants’ aged bodies:

And I won’t go back again [to the Philippines]. Because I’m not much use. I can only carry one brick at a time [laughs]. (Martin, follow-up interview)

I don’t do too much hard work, I must confess. I get tired because of probably my age and I’ve been, you know, sick prior to this. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

[In physical labour] My back slows me up [Ryan and Alan laugh]. (Alan, follow-up interview)

I’m limited [in physical labour], because of my back injury. With lifting and that. It [my back] did give me some trouble, but fortunately I have some good painkillers, oh yeah, and anti-inflammatories. (James, follow-up interview)

As the accounts of Martin, Dawn, Alan, and James attest, the aged bodies of participants decreased their capacity to materially aid the house build. In this sense, the participants’ bodies were limited and needy in ways younger bodies usually are not.

Figure 4.3: ‘Giving’ and ‘receiving’ – Participants resting and recovering with the help of the Nayonbago ‘ladies’ (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)
In light of the physical needs of their bodies, participants relied on the volunteer labour of Nayonbago women. These women—who were usually referred to as ‘the ladies’—were comprised of Nayonbago schoolteachers, neighbouring mothers, and Lucy – the recipient of the new home. The voluntary labour of these women materially supported aged participant bodies by ensuring they were always supplied with food, water, coffee, and a comfortable place to rest – often even bringing chairs out of their own homes (see Figure 4.3). In a follow-up interview, Mark acknowledged the significance of this help. Mark has been involved in the Philippines project since 2008. Like Rod, Mark identifies as an avid traveller, having spent long stretches of time backpacking and volunteering around the world. In partnership with Alan, Mark works throughout the year raising significant sums of money for the project:

[Talking of working in Nayonbago] Like you see with the [Nayonbago] ladies and that sort of thing, they’re always getting us fed and, ah, watered and that sort of thing. (Mark, aged 60, follow-up interview)

Thus while participants were tentatively positioned as ‘givers’ and ‘helpers’ in Nayonbago, at the same time, they were also aware of themselves as being ‘receivers’ and as ‘needy’. That is, participants were reflexive of the reciprocal exchange between both themselves and various Nayonbago residents. These social relationships may be understood as being mutually sustaining rather than purely hierarchical. The specific needs of aged bodies heightened participants’ awareness of their ambiguous positioning between roles of ‘host’/‘guest’ and ‘givers’/‘receivers’. Consequently, this awareness both blurred and troubled the discursive boundaries that distanced Nayonbago residents as Other.

4.3.2 Ageing Bodies and Ethical Dilemmas:

The Economic Irony of Voluntourism

Second, the materiality of ageing bodies was also experienced through a heightening of the ethical dilemmas around voluntourism. Rather than simply reproducing sets of ideas that sustain voluntourism as their avenue to moral
redemption, overall, participants were highly aware of the ethical dilemmas embedded in the voluntourism project. These ethical tensions tended to manifest through ongoing discussions on how to extend empathetic care to Nayonbago residents. As noted in my field diary: “Conversation within the group really focuses on the inequality here, how it came about, and how it can be helped” (field notes, 21.01.13). Similarly, in a follow-up interview, James confirmed:

Yeah, because there the conversation, I think, was always relating to the focus of what we were doing. We weren’t talking about the Australian cricket team. You know, we were talking about local issues the whole time, while we were there. (James, follow-up interview)

The aged bodies of participants became an entry point to reflect on the somewhat contradictory qualities of the project. A central question was: Why had they each spent quite substantial sums of money to perform unskilled and arguably menial manual labour? This tension calls into question the motivations of the participants, and was subsequently navigated in various ways. Rod, for example, was comfortable solving the dilemma by suggesting that, in addition to extending empathetic relations of care, he was also motivated by experiences of ‘fun’:

You do find yourself thinking, well, what’s a bunch of fellas in their [laughs] ah, you know, past their physical prime, what’s this bunch of fellas from Australia doing this unskilled labour in the Philippines? [...] From a logical point of view, that sort of doesn’t add up, really. But it’s [volunteering is] all fun, and everyone’s really enjoying it. (Rod, follow-up interview)

The materiality of the aged body became a constant point of reflection for their presence in Nayonbago. Rod understood there was something illogical in aged people travelling to volunteer. However, he sustained his identity as volunteer—and simultaneously resolved the acknowledged economic irony of his labour—through suggesting that “it’s all fun” and “everyone really enjoys it”. Thus,
beyond their limited physical labour, participants understood their presence as one of pleasure. Encounters with joy will be explored further in Chapter 5.

4.3.3 Embodied Personal Histories and Affective Intensities

Feminist approaches point to the importance of the 'personal' in understanding the differentiated responses to how people negotiate particular contexts. Thus, exploring how embodied personal histories play out in the context of places of socio-economic disadvantage is essential in understanding how voluntourists respond to their encounters with inequality.

In contrast to arguments advanced by Crossley (2012a, 2012b), the two 'defensive' and discursive participant responses to poverty discussed above do not necessarily work to reduce or neutralise the affective capacity of poverty. That is, while simultaneously tapping into ideas that transformed poverty into an object of moral redemption and constructing impoverished communities as 'poor-but-happy', participants experienced encounters with socio-economic disadvantage as highly emotional and affective. Indeed, some participants spoke about these moments of encounter in terms of both sustaining and inhibiting their capacity to volunteer. This suggests that, for participants, socio-economic disadvantage is much more than an idea. Instead, encounters with inequality triggered embodied histories that called into question participant roles as helpers.

This was particularly the case for long-time team members and husband and wife, Alan and Dawn. Dawn framed her embodied encounters with socio-economic disadvantage in terms of 'comfort zones'. Her embodied responses to poverty were both obstacle and motivator in her continued participation in voluntourism:
You think, I can’t do this [volunteer work in Nayonbago], I can’t do it again. But, if you remember what we’ve got in Australia compared to what the need is, I’m motivated to forget about your comfort zone and go and do it again. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

I’m out of my comfort zone by about 500%. But it’s the need that brings me back. (Dawn, field notes, 22.01.2013)

You’re torn between helping, and you’re out of your comfort zone that far, I am. [...] I had to push back to remind myself, over and over, that, you know, at least you can do something. Don’t let the first initial shock stop you [Ryan: Yep]. Because it can. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

Comfort will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Here, following Chappells and Shove (2005), it is important to conceptualise comfort as a precarious ‘socio-cultural achievement’. Comfort implies a seamless fit between a body and the space it inhabits. By feeling outside of her ‘comfort zone’, then, Dawn suggests a bodily awareness of being out of place or not belonging, which encourages her to question her role as ‘helper’.

Similarly, Alan was also highly affected by experiences of poverty, describing it as posing a very personal “emotional challenge,” which lingered long after returning. Recounting a chance meeting with a Nayonbago grandfather with a malformed leg, Alan spoke with much emotion:

What am I going to do about that guy? You see, it’s still there. And so, that’s a challenge that I’ve got. It’s an emotional challenge. But he won’t leave me. (Alan, follow-up interview)

And I had to keep it [the emotion] in check there [in the Philippines]. Even though it dwells up in me here [touches chest], it’s part of the.... stiff upper lip [begins silently weeping]. Because you will get swamped over there, with that need. (Alan, follow-up interview)
I get the joy of seeing something fixed or something healed in a person’s life, but I have that emotional down when it’s not. And I suffer with that. (Alan, follow-up interview)

Alan later expressed this in terms of ‘emotion energy’, which, like Dawn’s encounters, both encouraged and discouraged his continued volunteer labour. The deeply affective metaphor of feeling “swamped” suggests an experience of overwhelming helplessness, which, for Alan, must be “kept in check.” Like Dawn’s account above, Alan’s role of helper is not fixed, but is instead called into question through his deeply affective and challenging encounters with socio-economic disadvantage.

Interestingly, both Alan and Dawn relayed highly emotional and affective encounters with disability in Nayonbago. This seems to be mediated by their own embodied biographies, considering they have a severely disabled middle-aged son. As Dawn explained:

[On visiting a school for deaf and blind children] Oh, there’s tears in their eyes and tears in my eyes. And to see the disability, oh. Like, for me, because of having David [Dawn and Alan’s son] as a disabled young man, oh, I can relate. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

These participants demonstrate how deeply affective, empathetic encounters with poverty in Nayonbago both sustained and inhibited their embodied capacities to continue with their volunteer labour. This seems to contradict Crossley’s argument, discussed above, that the reproduction of normative discourses of socio-economic disadvantage neutralises the affective capacity of poverty through distancing. Indeed, for Dawn and Alan, embodied encounters with poverty were often powerful motivators in sustaining their volunteer labour in Nayonbago. Thus, rather than simply reproducing sets of ideas, highly emotional encounters with socio-economic disadvantage—entangled in embodied histories—destabilised and called into question both Alan’s and Dawn’s roles as ‘helpers’.
4.4 Conclusions

As this chapter demonstrated, volunteers sustained Nayonbago as a place of ‘need’ and their roles as ‘helpers’ through the collation of various normative discourses of socio-economic disadvantage, including: poverty as an object of moral betterment, the poor-but-happy, and a form of simplistic global development talk. However, these normative understandings were never fixed, but were instead troubled and destabilised through encounters with the aged body, ethical dilemmas, and affective responses to socio-economic disadvantage.

More specifically, through encounters with aged and needy bodies, participants became aware of their ambiguous positioning between being both ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’ in Nayonbago. The materiality of the aged body also called into question their motivations for performing unskilled labour in the Philippines. Further, contradicting Crossley’s (2012a, 2012b) argument, the reproduction of normative discourses of poverty did not appear to result in a distancing of poverty through neutralising its affective capacity. Instead, emotional and affective encounters with poverty—entangled in embodied biographies—proved powerful (de)motivators in sustaining participants’ continued labour in Nayonbago. Participants continually negotiated these embodied encounters and ethical dilemmas throughout the duration of the project, and complicate Alan’s original suggestion that being a ‘helper’ simply involves “having a good heart” and “some muscles.” Participants’ patent ethical reflexivity troubles the notion that they were simply reproducing sets of ideas. Instead, participants’ roles as ‘volunteers’ and ‘helpers’ were continually negotiated, (de)stabilised, and called into question. However, as well as being understood as a place of ‘need’, participants also sustained Nayonbago as a place of ‘celebration’. This will now be explored by examining three ‘celebratory’ events that took place during their time in the Philippines.
5

Sustaining Nayonbago as a Place of Celebration: Exploring Three ‘Celebratory’ Events

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the discursive webs, embodied encounters, and performances that helped sustain Nayonbago as a place of ‘celebration’. To this end, three ‘celebratory’ events that occurred during the Australian volunteers’ time in Nayonbago are examined.

First, the Rotary ‘Farewell Dinner’ is interpreted as an event staged to allow for ‘identity-oriented’ performances. Here, hegemonic meanings of being both ‘Rotarian’ and ‘benefactor’ were reproduced in space understood as ‘enclavic’. Participants expressed ambivalent attitudes towards the event, which I interpret as an ‘unwanted gift’ entangled in sets of uneven social relations.

Second, attention turns to the annual ‘Cultural Exchange’ evening. Here, performances of Australian identity—comprised of an Australianised rendition of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’—worked to reproduce social categories, such as ‘host’/‘guest’ and ‘Australian’/‘Filipino’. However, through joyous encounters with familiar sounds, rhythms, and motions, affective relations and social categories were reconfigured between the Nayonbago residents and Australian volunteers. Thus, the performance fostered an affective ‘closeness’ between the groups, akin to Routledge’s (2012) work on ‘sensuous solidarities’.

And, last, I explore the ‘dedication’ of the home, which concluded with a celebration involving ‘water play’ in the form of wetting bodies with water pistols and buckets. The affective and agentic qualities of water produced
embodied feelings of joy and anticipation, which ruptured social relations, identities, and hierarchies between Australian volunteers and Filipino hosts. Through the exploration of these three events the first and third research questions will be addressed.

5.2 The Rotary Farewell Dinner: Encounters with the Unwanted Gift

As the Rotary project in Nayonbago is sustained by an ongoing ‘sister-ship’ between Illawarra Sunrise and Bacolod Rotary Clubs, there is a yearly tradition of Bacolod Rotary hosting ‘welcome’ and ‘farewell’ dinners for the Illawarra club. These occur at the beginning and completion of the build, and take place in the function room of Sweetland Hotel – the Australian group’s place of lodging while volunteering. The focus of this section is the Rotary Farewell Dinner.

The Farewell Dinner performs a number of ostensible functions. First, Rotary governance requires joint, international club projects to be formalised through yearly renewing of ‘sister-ship agreements’. The dinner provides a setting for the co-signing of these official Rotary documents. Second, the mutual appreciation between clubs is expressed and celebrated, including speeches by members of both clubs and Bacolod Rotary presenting ‘certificates of appreciation’ to the Australian volunteers. And finally, less formally, the events allow Rotary members to develop and renew personal relationships between groups and individuals.

Two themes are discussed from the ethnographic materials. First, following Edensor (2001), I argue that the Rotary Farewell Dinner is comprised of highly enclavic ‘identity-oriented’ performances. Where, when, and how bodies encountered each other were designed to reproduce hegemonic meanings of being a ‘Rotarian’ and ‘benefactor’. And, second, I show how participants anticipated the event with a mix of both ambivalence and necessity. Following Farbotko and Head (2013), through paying attention to how bodies become
entangled in uneven social relations, the ambivalence surrounding the event of the Farewell Dinner is investigated as an ‘unwanted gift’.

![Diagram of a floor plan of the Sweetland Hotel function room](source: Ryan Frazer 2013)

**Figure 5.1**: Floor plan of the Sweetland Hotel function room. (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)

### 5.2.1 Becoming a Rotarian, Becoming a Benefactor

As Edensor (2001: 71) argued: “when tourists enter particular stages, they are usually informed by pre-existing discursive, practical, embodied norms which help to guide their performative orientations and achieve a working consensus about what to do.” Accordingly, tourist performances were ‘softly controlled’ at the Farewell Dinner (Edensor 2001: 67). This control endeavoured to determine where, when, and how bodies encountered one another. Subsequently, particular social subjectivities and sets of social relations were encouraged to fluoresce. Due to their highly regulated character, Edensor variously refers to these types of performances as ‘disciplined rituals’ (Edensor 2000) or ‘directed performances’ (Edensor 2001), where participants are led through ‘appropriate’ performances. The following discussion is based primarily on field notes and photographs from the event to provide examples of ‘disciplined rituals’ that comprised the dinner’s ‘identity-oriented’ performances.

The setting of the Rotary Farewell Dinner was relatively formal, with neatly decorated tables set up thoughtfully around the room (see Figure 5.1). At the
front of the room a large stage was backed by a sign, displaying the names of both Rotary clubs and the event. On the stage sat a wooden lectern fitted with a microphone, where the master of ceremonies directed performances. The MC—who introduced each speaker in turn—guided attendees through the evening. Rotarians from both clubs were called to the stage by the MC, giving various histories of the clubs and their ongoing international sister-ship, as well as personal stories relating to their work together, and their mutual appreciation of the relationship—both professional and personal. For example, Alan, the build Team Leader, after going through the ritual of extending his thanks to both the Bacolod Rotary Club and Australian volunteers, told a personal story where he had received emotional encouragement to continue with the project. At this point, it was clear that he had become quite emotional, and many of those attending responded in kind. Between speeches, a dedicated DJ would play music to fill the silence, creating a sense of occasion.

Edensor (2001: 65) argued: “rituals are most efficacious in their attempts to fix the meaning of sites and inscribe identity into the habit-body of the actors.” Through these ritualistic performances, thus, participants were complicit in reproducing hegemonic meanings and identities of being both ‘Rotarians’ and ‘benefactors’. Accordingly, Edensor (2001) refers to these as ‘identity-oriented’ performances.

Figure 5.2: The co-signing of the Rotary ‘sister-ship’ agreement between the two Rotary clubs. 
(source: Ryan Frazer 2013)
The act of co-signing the Rotarian ‘sister-ship’ agreement, for example, extended outwards to broader discourses and histories of Rotarian governance (see Figure 5.2). This governance requires official Rotarian relationships to be validated through written contract. Likewise, the act of being presented with and accepting ‘certificates of appreciation’ from the Bacolod Rotary Club reproduces dominant social norms of ‘being’ a benefactor (see Figure 5.3). Thus, the enclavic stage of the function room enabled the performance of these recognisable and unambiguous actions, expressing shared, common sense meanings and identities of being both a Rotarian and benefactor.

![Figure 5.3: Bacolod Rotary Club presenting a token of appreciation to the Illawarra Sunrise Rotary Club. (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)](image)

5.2.2 The Rotary Farewell as an ‘Unwanted Gift’

The Farewell Dinner worked to stabilise identities of ‘Rotarian’, ‘benefactor’, and ‘volunteer’. How participants talked about the event demonstrates how each was differently positioned in this event as a volunteer, Rotarian, and benefactor. For example, in follow-up interviews both James and Rod expressed a sense of discomfort and somewhat ambivalent attitudes towards the ritualistic character of the official dinners:
Ryan: So, like, what do you think about these [Rotary dinners] sorts of official occasions that you have?

James: Well, well, they’re, that’s good. But the ceremonies and the, um, the presentations of these great big things in frames [certificates of appreciation] and all this sorts of stuff, you know, I think, good God, we don’t want that. Most of us [Australian volunteers] left our frames behind because they were bulky, cumbersome, um, you know. (James, follow-up interview)

Rod: I was just so amused by the whole thing [the Rotary Farewell Dinner]. You know, I don’t want to be condescending, but it felt like I’d moved into a giant Oscars or something like that! Where [...] everything’s larger than it really is. When anybody, when there’s a celebration or whatever, a ceremony at every possibility, featuring background music and special music when people walk up to the podium, and, ah, well it’s just like they’re the Academy Awards, or something. And, um, um, yeah, all from an Australian perspective, a little bit, sort of, inflated compared to the actual significance of what’s happening. (Rod, follow-up interview)

James and Rod were acutely reflexive of the events as being both ‘staged’ and ‘scripted’. Indeed, Rod compared the events to the highly micro-managed, enclavic, and ritualistic performances of the Oscars. Through the staging of these official events James and Rod were aware of how they were positioned as volunteers and benefactors. Further, their identity as volunteers was cemented through the exchange economy of gifts. Yet, as Rod suggested, there is an ambivalence surrounding these events and how they configure the status of volunteers through the exchange of gifts between recipient and benefactor.

As the above accounts illustrate, participants generally expressed ambivalence towards the ‘gift’ of the Farewell Dinner – including the physical manifestations of this, such as the certificates of appreciation presented to Illawarra Rotary members by Bacolod Rotary. Yet there was a unanimous consensus that accepting these gifts was necessary. As Alan explained:
It’s important for the, for them, to say thank you. [...] Okay? And, ah, that’s part of it. And it [the Farewell Dinner] allows them to thank you. When I say them, I’m thinking the community out there to thank you. I know we go across with our ideas of humanity to help, we’re not looking for that [recognition]. But they want to present that. And you’ve got to be, what’s the word, humble enough to accept. (Alan, follow-up interview)

The participants recognised that the significance of the gift lay not in the materiality of what it was, but rather what the gift meant. Drawing on theories of gifting, Farbotko and Head (2013: 88) argued: “As gifts are given and received, identities are both cemented and augmented, and social and kinship relations are affirmed and extended.” Thus, gifting cannot be entirely accounted for through economic value alone. Instead, “gifts always engender social relations of reciprocity and beyond” (Farbotko & Head 2013: 88). In the same way that Farbokto and Head (2013) found unwanted Christmas gifts were often still desired and valued, the exchanging of gifts from Bacolod to Illawarra Rotary Clubs stabilised and augmented social identities, affirming social and kinship relations. More specifically, the act of giving and receiving the gift of the Farewell Dinner helped do the work of strengthening social relations between the two clubs and fixing the identities of their members as ‘Rotarians’, ‘volunteers’, and ‘benefactors’. Yet, for some participants, it also raised questions about the uneven attributes of these relationships.

As an interesting addendum to this section, although the physical objects gifted to participants were largely talked about as unwanted and inconvenient at the time, Alan’s account suggests they may have long-lasting value for participants:

And also, that certificate [of appreciation], whether it’s 2002, or whether it’s 2013, if you’re reviewing your files, it’s there. And you think back to those periods. (Alan, follow-up interview)

Alan’s account suggests that the values of gifts change. Back in Australia, the unwanted gift can trigger memories of the project. Recent work in geography has
illustrated the capacity for objects—such as souvenirs (Ramsay 2009) and photographs (Rose 2004)—to act as ‘affective stores’. This is not yet an avenue explored in voluntourism, and would make an interesting avenue for future research.

5.3 The Cultural Exchange: Encounters with National Icon and the Affective Capacity of Sounds, Rhythms, and Motions

Much research on voluntourism has focussed on its (in)capacity to develop intercultural understanding between volunteers and their hosts. In Spencer’s (2010) work in Cuba, for example, educational and interpersonal experiences led to tourists becoming radicalised, fostering active participation in USA-Cuba politics. On the other hand, Raymond and Hall (2008) found voluntourism projects could reinforce cultural stereotypes. However, this work has largely stayed within the realm of the discursive in thinking about voluntourists in relation to their hosts. The following discussion endeavours to move beyond this, exploring the role of affective relations embedded within geometries of power between older voluntourists and their hosts.

The ‘Cultural Exchange’ evening at Nayonbago School occurs each year at the beginning of the build. Here, school children organise various performances for the Rotary group, including customary Filipino/Nayonbago dance, song, and martial arts. In return, the volunteer group performs ‘something Australian’ for Nayonbago residents. This year, the group performed an ad-lib and Australianised rendition of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’. As will be shown, outwardly these evenings centred on performances of national identity. However, the embodied encounters experienced by participants altered affectual relations between themselves and their hosts. More specifically, I will argue the group’s performance of an Australianised ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’—while ostensibly a reproduction of hegemonic nationality—produced an affectual ‘closeness’ between bodies. The joy sustained by familiarity with the rhythm and

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13 NB This event occurred prior to my arrival in Nayonbago. Accordingly, the following analysis is based entirely on participants’ follow-up interviews and travel diaries.
playfulness of the motions dissolved social difference, blurring categorised identities of ‘volunteer’, ‘benefactor’, and ‘host’. This unity forged among socially diverse people is akin to Routledge’s (2012) work on ‘sensuous solidarities’.

Figure 5.4: Participants and Nayonbago residents dancing together at the Cultural Exchange. (source: participant ‘James’ 2013)

Through choreographed performances, the Cultural Exchange allowed both participants and Nayonbago residents to reproduce mutually recognised meanings of Australian and Filipino identities. Again, Edensor (2001) would here understand these as ‘identity-oriented’ performances. As Dawn stated in a follow-up interview: “We have the flags up there, the Philippine flag and they always have their anthem, and we have the Australian one.” Through the use of these anthems, ‘Australian’ songs, flags, and related props, national identities were unambiguously expressed, stabilised, and cohered. However, moving beyond both the discursive and performative, participants’ accounts of the Cultural Exchange emphasised affectual relations between bodies.

As stated above, this year the Australian volunteers performed an Australianised version of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’, which involved crowd participation from the school kids, their parents, and teachers (see Figure 5.4). This performance was
entirely impromptu. Led by Rod, the group sang and performed the various animals, encouraging all those present to do the same. Participants spoke of this performance with unanimous enthusiasm, expressing their mutually felt joy:

But the interaction between everybody [at the Cultural Exchange], it was fantastic. It galvanised the whole group. Everybody was all into it. (James, follow-up interview)

And they [Nayonbago residents] would sing their part, and we had to join them, like a couple of us were the pigs, a couple of us were the elephants, and whatever, and kangaroos. And, ah, it just, it was brilliant! It brought everyone together. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

It [the Cultural Exchange] brings people closer together. You know, it, um, doing things like that or singing or dancing, it’s, um, it breaks things down, it changes the relationship between people. [...] It’s a more human connection. (Rod, follow-up interview)

Good. Because, um, it [the performance] brings you down to earth. It’s not all of just official. There is a, now it’s a mateship, type of thing. It’s a friendship. And, um, so there is a difference. You become human. You know, not just a figure. (Alan, follow-up interview)

It [the Cultural Exchange] was just a scream. [laughs] (Mark, follow-up interview)

Geographers have recently begun paying attention to the importance of sounds, rhythms, and motions in understanding space, subjectivities, and affective relations (Routledge 2012; Waitt et al. 2013). As Waitt et al. (2013: 5), following Probyn (2000), suggested: “sound mediates the affective and emotional energies within, across and between human and non-human bodies.” Further, through sounds and rhythms: “Affective relations have the capacity momentarily to mobilise people together to forge a collective” (Waitt et al. 2013). Similarly,
Routledge (2012: 428), in his work on the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA), showed how ‘sensuous solidarities’ can be “generated through diverse bodily movements and techniques”, which “mobiliz[e] particular emotions, symbolism, and politics.” Thus, sounds, rhythms, and motions have the affective capacity to both bring together and pull apart socially diverse bodies.

The above participant accounts demonstrate this well. Through the performance of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’, which included crowd participation with both singing and dancing, affective relations were altered. When using the metaphor of ‘bringing everyone together’, for instance, Rod and Dawn were clearly not referring to a physical ‘closeness’, but rather an affectual and embodied one. As Bissell suggests, affect “is not bound to particular bodies,” but is instead the “energetic outcome of encounters between bodies in particular places” (Bissell 2010: 271). These affectual encounters “work to align bodies together in particular ways” (Bissell 2010: 280). This is perhaps most powerfully illustrated in James’ use of the relational metaphor of the ‘galvanisation’ of the group. Here, as Rod suggested, the affective outcome of bodies singing and moving together translated into a “more human connection” between the Australian volunteers and their hosts. This indicates the impromptu performance helped dissolve social difference, including roles of ‘volunteer’ and ‘host’.

Interestingly, rather than simply being an ‘in-the-moment’ or ephemeral experience of affective closeness, James explained that these encounters had long lasting effects on his ongoing relationship to the Philippines as a nation:

*Well that’s it. It [the Cultural Exchange] creates that wonderful goodwill, that enthusiasm and that sharing of culture. I swear, we’re all part of the Asian, great network, and it’s, ah, really great. You know, that familiarity. Yeah, this is it. And you, yeah, I guess, the Philippines has become an adopted country, where you are very conscious of anything that’s happening in the Philippines.*

(James, follow-up interview)
Rather than imagining Australia and the Philippines as entirely distinct and disconnected nations, James has instead reconceptualised the two as connected through the “great network of Asia.” Now, the Philippines “has become an adopted country,” with ongoing implications for his life back in Australia. As such, James’s account suggests that affective encounters—produced through sounds, rhythms, and motions—may have political consequences akin to Routledge’s (2012) ‘sensuous solidarities’.

5.4 The Dedication: Encounters with Water Through Play

Finally, the ‘dedication’ of the house occurs annually at the completion of the build. This event signifies the official ‘handing over’ of the house to the receiving family. For this project, the event consisted of three main components. First, an official ceremony in Nayonbago Livelihood Centre, which involved speeches, a prayer, and a ‘home partner’s pledge’14. Second, a further ceremony at the house, which included ribbon cutting, photo taking, and a blessing ritual with candles and prayers (see Figure 5.5). And, finally, a group lunch back at the Livelihood Centre, which concluded with what I refer to here as ‘water play’. This ‘play’ involved the indiscriminate wetting of bodies with water pistols and buckets, with Australian volunteers, local partners15, and Nayonbago residents (including those not directly involved with the house build) all taking part.

Much like the Rotary Farewell Dinner, the first two components of the Dedication Ceremony were comprised of highly ritualised, enclavic performances, which worked to stabilise social identities and relationships. Although these are worthy aspects of analysis, the focus of this section is the group’s experiences of and encounters with ‘water play’. However, to provide context, the meanings and ethics of water in Nayonbago will first be discussed.

14 The ‘home-partner’s pledge’ was a verbal promise from the receiving family to take conscientious care of the home. This was first recited by member of Bacolod Rotary, which Lucy—the mother of the receiving family—repeated back to those attending the dedication.

15 This included members from Bacolod Rotary Club, Bacolod Church of Christ, Bacolod Habitat for Humanity, and various local government officials.
5.4.1 Meanings, Ethics, and Water in Nayonbago

The majority of non-potable water in Nayonbago is accessed through bores. This bore water is primarily used for washing, while drinking water is largely accessed through centralised treated water systems. Most of the water used for the water play was brought to the Livelihood Centre by Nayonbago mothers and children, who used buckets normally used for transporting drinking water.

Although, as discussed in Chapter 3, participants understood Nayonbago as ‘needy’, the use of large amounts of water at the Dedication Ceremony was not seen as wasteful. In a follow-up interview, for example, Mark suggested: “Water’s not a problem there. Um, I wouldn’t lick it off your lips or anything, you wouldn’t know where it came from.” As it was not ‘drinking’ water being used, the water play was not understood as problematic in terms of the consumption of a scarce resource.
However, some participants raised concerns about the cultural meanings and values of water. A pastor from the local Church of Christ informed the group that ‘water fights’ were not common in Nayonbago. This use of water was usually reserved for the annual Catholic celebration of John the Baptist, also known as the ‘San Juan Bautista Festivity’ or the ‘Regada Annual Water Festival’, which suggests values of water in Nayonbago are linked to discourses and performances of Christianity. As one Filipino tourism blog states: “The annual festival has evolved into a combined environmental, religious and cultural activity” (Cavitenio News 2009). However, due to the word space restrictions of this thesis, this ethical tension is not explored here, but would make for interesting future research.

5.4.2 Dissolving Social Difference: The Affective Capacity of Water

The participants spoke frequently and enthusiastically about the water play in the days leading up to the Dedication Ceremony. As suggested above, although all participants referred to the event as a ‘fight’, it was more akin to ‘play’ with
water. Following Routledge (2012: 433): “play can rearrange and question existing social arrangements, and [...] connect bodies, emotions, and lived worlds.” Thus, here, I demonstrate how ‘water play’ and the affective and agentic qualities of water transformed both social and affectual relations between the bodies of Australian volunteers and their hosts.

**Box 1: When the Water Play Began**

Following the official Dedication Ceremony, the Australian volunteers, official Filipino partners, and various Nayonbago residents sat to eat lunch in the cool shade of the open-walled Nayonbago vocation centre (see Figure 5.6). Without warning, a pastor from the local Church of Christ poured a bucket of water over build Team Leader Alan’s head, and everything changed. Laughter and joyful screaming filled the air. The crowd frantically dispersed. Some people, both Australian and Filipino, ran off in search of containers and water. Others ran in search of shelter from the potential contact with water – behind walls, in cars. Nayonbago children flocked in, ready to join the fun. There was a felt intensity in the air, with hearts racing, full of anticipation. It did not cease until everyone was wet. (Ryan Frazer, constructed from field notes, 25/01/2013)

Much like the Cultural Exchange, participants’ accounts emphasised the reconfiguration of affective and social relations between bodies through the joy of ‘water play’:

*[The water fight is] a real, um, I wouldn’t call it an icebreaker, because there’s no ice to be broken. Because, it’s just, um, it’s just a fun, a fun thing to do, I think. Just to have a bit of a rumble, you know. And, um, I think they [Nayonbago residents] just love to do it. Um, yeah I just think it’s a fun thing. It just gives you that much closener [sic], closer to them, you know. You get drenched at the end of the day, laugh about it, you know. [...] But, um, it really is a loosener, a real leveller. Yeah, it’s pretty well a tradition now, the water fights on the building site.* (Mark, follow-up interview)
But at the end of it, it [the water play] breaks down a lot of barriers, and, um, they [Nayonbago residents] realise that, um, the team can have fun, too. And, ah, they don’t mind throwing the buckets of water [laughs]. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

Well you really get down to the way they [Nayonbago residents] are. It’s, um, it [the water play] allows them to celebrate with you, people you don’t know, and children you don’t know, and all of a sudden you’ll find you’ve got a cup of water over you, or a bucket over you, or something. And it’s a celebration. It’s like a baptism, if you want to call it in a Christian perspective. A new life takes place. And the way we celebrate, it’s wonderful. [...] Because it really brings you, bonds you together, when people get together like that, hug each other after in joy. (Alan, follow-up interview)

There is an unquestionable sensuousness in water on bodies. Far from being the simple, discrete, and inert entity Australian government policy imagines it to be, water flows in, over, around, and through space, complexly affecting that which it touches (Gibbs 2013). In this vein, recent work in geography has explored the non-human “agency of water assemblages” (Gibbs 2013). Following this, the participants’ anticipation of the sensuous experience of water soaking through clothes, touching skin, making wet, and drawing heat from the body, attests to the affective and agentic qualities of water. This was likely enhanced through the contrast of the coolness of the water to the hot stickiness of Nayonbago’s 30-plus degree average temperatures. Further, considering the Illawarra Sunrise Rotary project’s links to Christianity, Alan’s reference to the religious and baptismal meanings of water is significant. It suggests ideas of Christianity inform some participant’s understandings of the water play, with sensuous contact with water signifying the commencement of “a new life tak[ing] place” (Alan, follow-up interview).

Through water play, participant bodies were affectively (re)aligned through the shared experience of joyful anticipation in “getting drenched” (Mark) and “throwing buckets of water” (Alan), which resulted in laughter and embodied
experiences of fun. As Routledge (2012: 428) suggested—quite fittingly, in fact—“Laughter moves through the crowd like ripples over water.” Water acted on bodies to produce mutual, embodied, and affectual experiences of joy. Likewise, as Alan suggested, the water play encouraged participants to “hug together after in joy.” Thus, water play opened up opportunities for visceral touch between bodies, creating physical bridges across social difference.

The above accounts demonstrate how the affective, sensuous, and shared experience of water play in the context of the Dedication Ceremony disrupted otherwise formalised social roles and identities, such as ‘volunteer’, ‘Rotarian’, or ‘benefactor’. Similar to the Cultural Exchange, participants articulated this through metaphors that suggest the development of an affectual closeness: ‘getting closer’, ‘breaking barriers’, and ‘bonding together’. Thus, affective encounters with water play destabilised social hierarchies between Australian volunteers and their various hosts.

5.5 Conclusions

Through the entanglement of performances, discursive webs, and embodied encounters, participants sustained Nayonbago as a place of celebration. The three celebratory encounters discussed above worked to both reproduce and dissolve social categories and roles of ‘Rotarian’, ‘benefactor’, ‘Australian’, ‘host’, and ‘guest’. First, the Rotary Farewell Dinner was understood as an enclavic space that encouraged the reproduction of ‘identity-oriented’ performances of becoming a ‘Rotarian’ and ‘volunteer’. The gifts of the event become unwanted through participants’ heightened sense of the inequalities between the recipients and benefactors. However, participants recognised the entanglements of social identities and relations through the act of gifting, and thus understood the necessity of accepting the gift.

Second, the Cultural Exchange was outwardly comprised of performances of nationality. However, though the use of sounds, rhythms, and motions—in the form of an Australianised performance of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’—affective and
social relations between bodies were realigned. Participants articulated this as an affective ‘closeness’, akin to Routledge's work on ‘sensuous solidarities’.

Finally, the affective, sensuous, and agentic qualities of water used during the water play that concluded the Dedication Ceremony were shown to create shared and embodied feelings of joy. Like the performance of ‘Old McDonald’s Farm’, the joy of encountering water in the context of the Dedication Ceremony fostered an affective closeness across bodies, bridging difference. Moving away from Nayonbago, the ways in which participants understood their hotel as a ‘restorative’ place will now be explored.
6

_Sweetland Hotel as a Place of Restoration_

6.1 Introduction

All members of the Rotary group resided in Sweetland Hotel for the entirety of the volunteer project in Nayonbago. The hotel is located approximately two kilometres from Bacolod City CBD and ten kilometres from Nayonbago village (see Figure 1.1). Sweetland was the participants’ primary site of consumption, and where participants spent their largest portion of time: meeting, eating, drinking, relaxing, using internet facilities, attending to personal hygiene, and sleeping. Participants understood Sweetland Hotel as being one of the most luxurious hotels in Bacolod city, variously articulated as “very Western” (Mark) and “quite palatial” (James), and is illustrated in Figure 6.1 below.

![Figure 6.1: The front entrance of the ‘Western’ and ‘opulent’ Sweetland Hotel](source: Bacolod City Development Centre 2012)
In light of this, the overarching aim of this chapter is to explore the discourses—here understood as ‘hotel talk’—embodied encounters, practices, and ethical dilemmas that sustain the hotel as a ‘restorative’ space. The chapter will be broken into three overlapping strands, which will address the first and third guiding research questions.

First, the discussion briefly explores how crossing the material threshold of the hotel helped constitute a social border that was discursively (re)made through participants’ hotel talk. This border reproduced a simple spatial dualism between ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’ places. Second, following on from this, the discussion turns to participants’ hotel talk in exploring their embodied encounters with and practices of comfort and cleanliness in Sweetland Hotel. Through encounters with and practices of cold air, hotel water, hotel food, and hotel upholstery, participants reconfigured bodily comfort as a socio-cultural achievement. The discussion then moves on to how participants sustained the hotel as a place where empathetic and familial relations of care could be extended between members of the group – thus, also supporting them emotionally. Here, the hotel is conceptualised as comprising a ‘therapeutic landscape’. Following this, the hotel was here understood as a place where participants could “recoup [their] strength” (Alan & Dawn, travel diary, 27/01/2013) in order to continue their volunteer labour in Nayonbago. Finally, the discussion charts the ways participants navigated the ethical tension produced by the ironic juxtaposition between the socio-economic disadvantage of those residing in Nayonbago and the socio-economic advantage of those residing in the hotel. This was resolved through recourse to the specific needs of aged bodies.
6.2 Sweetland as an ‘Oasis’ from the ‘Wilds’ of the Philippines

First, participants’ hotel talk constituted the material threshold of the hotel as a social border that drew on dualistic thinking. The inside of the hotel was discursively fashioned as an ‘oasis’, ‘haven’, ‘refuge’, and ‘opulent’. In contrast, stepping across and outside the threshold of the hotel was spoken about as the ‘wilds’ of the Philippines (see Figure 6.2):

Ryan: And so here is the hotel [points to a photo]. Kind of like a place [Dawn: A haven]. Yes, yeah [Ryan and Dawn laugh]
Dawn: A respite in the storm. A haven. Just luxury. It’s not five star, but it certainly is for us. (Dawn, follow-up interview)

And that’s why when we go back to the hotel, that’s why that oasis, I’ll call it, an oasis where we can sit and talk. (Alan, follow-up interview)

It’s sort of, um, have a shower, have a swim, clean and well-fed. Clean clothes. And then, and then [laughs] you venture out into the wilds of the Philippines.
every day. But you’ve been reinforced by, by, um, by the hotel, and um, I enjoyed it. (Rod, follow-up interview)

See, there’s two worlds in the Philippines. The world we were working with in the daytime, where we were really basic. And then, at night, you were coming to another world, which was opulent, ah, over the top in some places. (James, follow-up interview)

Although there is certainly more than just ‘talk’ going on in the above accounts, the passages powerfully illustrate how participants drew on simple spatial metaphors in positioning the hotel as a protective space. These metaphors hark back to essentialist civilised/wild dualisms. These work to reproduce a discursively constructed divide between the ‘wild’, which is considered chaotic and dangerous, and the ‘civilised’, which is considered ordered and safe. Thus, participants’ hotel talk materialises the threshold of the hotel as a social border between places understood as ordered, from those understood as chaotic and disorderly (see Figure 6.3 for layout of the hotel ground floor).

![Figure 6.3: Sweetland Ground Level Floor Plan (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)](image)
6.3 (Re)Making the Hotel as an Oasis: Practices and Encounters with Air, Water, Food, and Upholstery

However, beyond the discursive, participants’ accounts emphasised the embodied and practical in reconfiguring Sweetland Hotel as a restorative space. Consequently, this section explores the importance of a range of practices and bodily encounters that work to make and remake the hotel as a felt oasis from a disorderly Philippines. Four themes will be explored. First, attention is given to the practice of air-conditioning and bodily encounters with cold air. Second, the importance of cleansing practices—including both bodies and clothes—through encounters with hotel water in showers, toilets, and pools will be explored. Third, attention turns to the practice of eating and bodily encounters with food understood as ‘clean’. And, last, the discussion concludes with participants’ embodied encounters with upholstered chairs and mattresses and the related practices of sitting, reclining, and sleeping.

6.3.1 Comfort and Cleanliness as Socio-Cultural Achievements

There has been a recent surge of exciting work in comfort and cleanliness. A common definition of ‘comfort’ comes from historian John Crowley (2001: 142), who suggested comfort is “a self conscious satisfaction with the relationship between one’s body and its immediate physical environment.” However, this definition leaves the ontological status of comfort unanswered. Thus, in conceptualising comfort, Chappells and Shove (2005) argued that there are two primary theoretical positions. The first sustains comfort as “a universally definable set of affairs” (Chappells & Shove 2005: 34). Research in this area largely draws on positivist methods. Comfort is here understood a purely physiological state that can be measured and reproduced – such as ‘optimal’ ambient temperatures, humidities, and textures. On the other hand, comfort has been conceptualised as socio-cultural achievement (Chappells & Shove 2005: 34). Here, experiences of comfort are provisional and precarious, inevitably mediated by and entangled with discourse, practices, technologies, and habits.
Extending these ideas to include non-representational energies or forces at play, Bissell (2008: 1701) conceptualised comfort as “a specific affective resonance,” which is “not captured, enclosed, [or] objectified through specific technologies or objects but can circulate between and through both objects and bodies.” Thus, comfort is a fluid, complex, and relational synergy between bodies and proximal objects, while also entangled in broader discourses and bodily habits.

Following the epistemology of comfort as a socio-cultural achievement, Shove (2003a, 2003b) powerfully argued that understandings of comfort are becoming increasingly homogenised globally. The narrowing of the definitions of comfort is a co-evolution of technologies and collective expectations (Shove 2003b). As will be shown in the following section, participants’ embodied encounters with and practices of comfort in Sweetland Hotel are complicit in, and productive of, dominant understandings of and encounters with comfort more broadly.

6.3.2 Encounters with Hotel Air

The significance of air-conditioning technologies and their relationship to corporeal comfort has not escaped academic interest (Chappells & Shove 2005; Cole et al. 2008; Healy 2008). This work has principally focused on the (un)sustainability of comfort practices in terms of non-renewable resource use. Air-conditioners were originally designed to improve the reliability and efficiency of manufacturing processes (Healy 2008). Today, air-conditioners in most Western nations are used to control the ambient air temperature in summer and “account for the lion’s share of domestic energy use” (Shove 2003a: 396). Over the last half century, air-conditioning as a summer cooling practice has progressively become the norm in most nations. Shove (2003a) has tracked the history of thermal comfort and the increasing global homogenisation of indoor environments – sometimes referred to as ‘thermal monotony’ (Shove 2003a). Following this, Shove (2003a, 2003b) argued that air-conditioning
companies, technologies, and globally recognised codes and standards\textsuperscript{16} are complicit in the reproduction of what ‘comfort’ is. Following this framework, the bodily ‘need’ for air-conditioning is not simply a ‘natural’ consequence of the human condition, but is instead (re)made through practice, habit, and encounter.

In light of this, the participants’ understanding of the hotel as an ‘oasis’ is a particularly interesting one. It evokes images of a cool, isolated, life-sustaining island in the midst of a hot, sprawling, uninhabitable landscape. Approaching the entrance to Sweetland Hotel, the volunteer group were invariably received by a smiling hotel employee who would pull open the double-glass doors. Inside, participants were greeted with a felt rush of electrically-cooled and conditioned air that participants spoke about as ‘refreshing’. Here, they were removed from the thermal, humid, and fragrant variability of Bacolod City, with its year-round daily ambient temperatures averaging over 30 degrees Celsius, only dropping to a low of 23 degrees Celsius late in the evening.

Participants understood their experiences of the hotel as an oasis were mediated by the hotel’s compliance with these increasingly universalised thermal standards:

\textit{Just luxury. It’s [Sweetland Hotel] not five star, but it certainly is for us. It feels definitely five star, coming in from the hot, um, outside, and coming in, and you’re just treated like, really, royalty, aren’t we? (Dawn, follow-up interview)}

\textit{I mean, it’s lovely to have the hotel to go back to, to have a shower and have the air conditioner, have the pool and all that sort of thing to relax at the end of the day. (Mark, follow-up interview)}

\textsuperscript{16} Such as the \textit{American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers’} (ASHRAE) ‘Standard 55’ (Chappells & Shove 2005).
And even for myself, you know, I enjoy the air-conditioning and the, jump in the end of the pool, and go to the nice dining room, have the nice toilets and all that sort of stuff. (Rod, follow-up interview)

Empirical research has found people to feel bodily comfort in temperatures ranging from 6 to 30 degrees Celsius, and thermal variability is often valued (Chappells & Shove 2005). However, as illustrated by Dawn, Mark, and Rod, an increasing homogenisation of indoor environments means “a particular model of comfort has been reified, naturalized and reproduced” (Chappells & Shove 2005: 34). Thus, crossing the material threshold of the hotel boundary, participants’ encounters with cold air reconfigured normative understandings of comfort. Comfort was felt by how the cold dry air stopped the body from sweating and protected them from the stickiness of humidity. In contrast to the sweat-inducing streets of Nayonbago, the thermal atmosphere of the hotel suppressed the rupturing of otherwise porous bodily boundaries, maintaining the illusion of bodily impermeability. This is closely related to the participants’ understandings and practices of bodily cleanliness in Sweetland Hotel.

6.3.3 Encounters with Hotel Water

As the above accounts attest, participants’ bodily encounters with hotel water also featured prominently. The ground floor of the hotel contained an outside—but entirely enclosed—wading pool (see Figure 6.3). Much like the thermally refreshing encounter with hotel air, participants used the pool to refresh and relax their bodies after working in and inhabiting the thermally unregulated spaces of Nayonbago. I observed that pool activities were central in configuring leisure time in afternoons after returning from Nayonbago, assisted through drinking cold beer or soda. Rod articulated this well:

I kind of like that feeling of sitting around, sitting around and having a swim after having done a hard day’s work. (Rod, follow-up interview)
[After returning to the hotel after working in Nayonbago] Doing laps in the hotel pool. (Rod, travel diary, 22.01.13)

Encounters with and practices of the hotel pool helped sustain Rod’s understanding of the hotel as an oasis from “the wilds of the Philippines” (Rod follow-up interview). Here, the possibilities to relax and escape are felt through options to swim in the clean, cool hotel pool. “Having done a hard day’s work,” participants’ bodily contact with hotel water worked to (re)make the hotel as a place of corporeal comfort. The leisurely space of the hotel was thus understood as separate from Nayonbago’s spaces of labour.

![Figure 6.4: ‘Clean’ and ‘Comfortable’ bathrooms in Sweetland. (source: Ryan Frazer 2013)](image)

Hotel water was used not only in achieving experiences of comfort, relaxation, and ‘time out’ from work, but also featured prominently in participants’ cleaning and hygiene practices, such as bathing, washing clothes, and using toilets\(^{17}\). Like

\(^{17}\) As a related side note, toilets and restrooms in the Philippines are universally referred to as ‘Comfort Rooms’ – or ‘CRs’. This is perhaps indicative of the close relationship between achievements of human comfort and cleanliness.
comfort, Shove (2003a, 2003b) has tracked the genealogy of discourses and practices of cleanliness. Far from being simply a ‘natural’ human need, meanings and practices of cleaning and hygiene are entangled in discourses and habits of cleanliness, which have shifted drastically over time. As Shove (2003a: 397) pointed out: “It is hard to explain the move from weekly bathing to twice daily showering in similar terms [to thermal comfort] for the technologies of the bath and shower are relatively stable.” Instead, Shove (2003a: 406) argued, “standards involved [in cleanliness] are normative rather than regulatory.” Resource-intensive ‘flush and forget’ toilet technologies ubiquitous in Australian homes, for example, allow users to dispose of their human excrement quickly and cleanly above and beyond any health concerns (Gibson et al. 2013).

Following this, participants’ understandings of Sweetland as an oasis was sustained through practices of and encounters with the hotel entwined with habits of cleanliness, respectability, and self-presentation:

*About 11:00 we went back to Sweetland, got prettied up for 2:30 opening ceremony.* (Martin, travel diary, 25.10.13)

*It’s sort of, um, have a shower, have a swim, clean and well-fed. Clean clothes.* (Rod, follow-up interview)

*We went back, we’re just spoilt, we went back to the hotel that day and had a lunch. And, um, drinks, and went and had a shower. We can go and do that.* (Dawn, follow-up interview)

Entering Sweetland after a day of working in Nayonbago or exploring Bacolod City, participants understood the hotel as a place that allowed them to ‘get clean’ and ‘prettied up’ through bodily and clothing cleaning practices understood as normative. Further, Sweetland supplied participants with the familiar, water-intensive toilet technologies otherwise unavailable in Nayonbago. These “clean” (Rod, follow-up interview) and “nice toilets” (Mark, follow-up interview) allowed participants to dispose of the smells, sights, and sounds of their excrement
within the highly sterilised privacy of their ‘Western’ hotel rooms (see Figure 6.4). Thus, encounters with and practices of hotel water enabled participants to restore a sense of bodily order by removing the dust, soil, bodily excrement, food, drinks, sand, and so forth that became attached to or escaped from their bodies and clothes during the day.

6.3.4 Encounters with Hotel Food

Illness from ingested foodstuffs was an ongoing concern during the volunteer project. Like bodily sweat, food and illness associated with consumption rupture the illusion of an impermeable body. However, Sweetland was sustained as a place that protected participants from the potential corporeal danger of street foods—which were understood as ‘unsafe’—through offering ‘clean’ food:

_Um, yeah, the food’s pretty good [at Sweetland]. Ah, I don’t get too many tummy bugs, but yeah, some people do. It’s hard to say. I think the food’s pretty good there. It’s pretty clean. Yeah._ (Mark, follow-up interview)

_But, ah, yeah, that was quite good [the daily debriefing sessions], and it’s safe eating there [at Sweetland]. Whereas a lot of other places aren’t really very safe eating._ (Martin, follow-up interview)

_[After day of unpacking boxes] Lunch hotel. Very appreciated._ (Alan & Dawn, travel diary, 17.01.13)

This concern was later validated when three volunteers—James, Martin, and myself—fell ill after consuming street food. Participants’ food practices and encounters sustained the threshold of the hotel door as the barrier between ‘clean’/’unclean’, or ‘safe’/’unsafe’ eating.

As an interesting aside, although understood as ‘clean’ and ‘Western’, hotel food gradually became a source of tension at meal times. As participants stayed in
Sweetland for over two weeks—and most breakfasts and dinners were consumed there—the gustatory monotony of the relatively limited restaurant menu was a source of frustration for some participants. As Rod, with just a hint of distaste, noted in his travel diary, “Dinner at the hotel – the usual menu choice” (Rod, travel diary, 25.01.13). Although Sweetland food was ‘safe’, it was increasingly perceived as bland and unpalatable as the project proceeded. This potentially troubles participants’ reproduction of Sweetland Hotel as an ‘oasis’.

6.3.5 Encounters with Hotel Upholstery

Lastly, participants’ encounters with and practices of hotel upholstery were also entangled with their understanding of Sweetland as an oasis. Like all ‘higher-end’ hotels globally, to facilitate corporeal comfort Sweetland offered guests various modes of sitting, reclining, and sleeping. The primary encounters with and practices of hotel upholstery occurred in the evening, where participants would sit around the hotel pool before dinner, and retire to their rooms and beds afterwards. For Rod, comfort was here articulated as “that feeling of sitting around [...] and having a swim” (follow-up interview). Encounters with ‘clean and comfortable’ hotel upholstery allowed participants’ bodies to ‘recover’:

But, um, I think we all like our clean and comfortable beds and toilets. (Mark, follow-up interview)

Feeling jet lag—Not slept well—so very tired. Stayed at hotel to recover. (Alan & Dawn, travel diary, 16.01.13)

[At Sweetland] Just relaxing and recouping our strength. (Alan & Dawn, travel diary, 27.01.13)

Following Bissell's (2008) conceptualisation of comfort as a fluid and relational synergy of complex assemblages of bodies, technologies, discourses, and habits, we can observe that participants sustained Sweetland as an ‘oasis’ through
encounters with and practices of hotel air, water, food, and upholstery. Further, through these practices and encounters participants were complicit in reproducing dominant and normative understandings of comfort and cleanliness. The above participant accounts illustrate the “dynamics of [the] relationship between the necessarily localised milling of meaning and practice and the standardised, potentially global, ‘scripts’ of comfort or cleanliness” (Shove 2003a: 410). Further, it is evident that Sweetland hotel as an enclavic space conformed to the “remarkably uniform indoor conditions around the world” (Shove 2003b: 197)—captured by Mark’s description of Sweetland as “very Western” (follow-up interview).

6.4 Sweetland as a Therapeutic Landscape:

Extending Relations of Care

As an oasis, the hotel was not just a place where bodily order could be restored through washing, eating, and sleeping, but also a therapeutic space of emotional support. Recent work in health geography has conceptualised such places as ‘therapeutic landscapes’ (Milligan et al. 2004; Lea 2008). For example, Milligan et al.’s (2004) work on older people in Britain explored how older people understood ‘nature’—specifically in the form of communal gardening—as ‘therapeutic’ and ‘restorative’. Through the extension of interpersonal relations between fellow gardeners in the context of a landscape understood as ‘natural’, older people experienced a felt therapeutic restoration.

In a similar vein, participants sustained the hotel as space where empathetic relations of care could be extended between group members. Each morning between breakfast and the commencement of their volunteer labour, the group took part in a ‘debriefing’ session in a private room in the hotel (see Figure 6.3). There, all group members sat at a table and, in turn, each was invited to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the preceding day(s). The sessions typically ended with a group prayer, with participants holding hands. This suggests the debriefing was entangled in and complicated by discourses and practices of Christianity, which caused a tension for self-identified atheist, Rod.
As Martin later explained in a follow-up interview, this debriefing has been a fundamental component of the project ever since it was run by Habitat for Humanity six years prior.

The debriefing sessions fulfilled two primary functions. First, participants were able to encourage and support each other emotionally and, secondly, to facilitate emotional bonds. The following exchange with Dawn exemplified this well:

Ryan: And so is that kind of like a place [Sweetland Hotel] where you can, kind of, like relax and get ready to work again?
Dawn: Yes, definitely. Yeah. You sort of build up your reserves and, um, you can relate to your team members and debrief a bit. Talk about things. And someone else might have had the same problem, or the same feelings, or someone else will encourage you, you know. And you’ll go out again to do something else in that afternoon.

Ryan: And so, with the debriefing, which happens in the hotels as well, so what sort of effect does that have?

Dawn: I think you really need it, and it’s very helpful. [R: Okay.] Definitely, everybody. You might go over there feeling very strong and, um, definitely won’t be affected. But, I think, even the strongest person, you know, on the team, is affected with different things different days. But then we all feel the same things, so we can encourage another person, you know. And they’re very caring team members. Like, they’ll see you, and, How are you going? Are you okay, or? It’s how the team works. If you did it on your own, it’d be very difficult.

Ryan: Okay. And so do you think the debriefings are a pretty vital part of the/ /Dawn: That’s what Mary [Vaccination Team Leader] always found, the team leader always found, that we need it. Even when you get back here, we need a meeting to brief. Um, you might have a different opinion about something, but then you can sort of think about it and, it helps you refocus when you get back home. (Dawn, follow-up interview)
As discussed in Chapter 3, emotional and embodied encounters with poverty can both increase and decrease participants’ capacity to continue with their volunteer labour. Following this, strong affective and emotional responses to socio-economic disadvantage may build and stick through the day. However, Dawn’s account suggests that the daily debriefing worked to facilitate mutual emotional support and encouragement through the extension of empathetic relations of care. Dawn expressed this through ‘building up your reserves’, receiving ‘encouragement’, being ‘helpful’, and ‘refocusing’. Alternatively, other participants articulated the group bond produced through sharing traumatic experiences as ‘familial’. For example, participants variously stated in the debriefing sessions: “We’re a close-knit family” (Mark, field notes 24.01.13); and “We’re like a big, happy family” (unattributed, field notes, 27.01.13). These comments lend support to Chen and Chen’s (2008) argument that older voluntourists are likely to be motivated by social or interpersonal experiences. Thus, the hotel as a therapeutic landscape relied upon a reciprocal relationship between the hotel understood and felt as an ‘oasis’ and the emotional bonds of the debriefing sessions. For many, the outcome of this was the hotel was experienced as a restorative space that enabled participants to continue with their volunteer labour.

However, for Rod, these debriefing sessions were not unproblematic. Rotary International, as an institution, is an expressly secular organisation. In spite of this, each session closed with a group prayer led by various members of the group, which created an ethical tension for Rod:

**Ryan:** What about the, um, the morning sharing [debriefing] time?

**Rod:** That, um, in general, I thought that was a good thing to do. You know, it’s a nice thing to do. Ah, there’s a big presumption, I think about, you know, there’s a thing, you’re a... there’s a Christian thing. And, um, I’m definitely not a Christian. Um, so there’s a, there’s, there’s quite a presumption about that, I thought. [...] Sometimes I felt like saying: “You know, I’m not going to hold hands, I’m not interested in Father God.” And, um, but then I thought: “What’s
Apart from Rod and myself, all members of the group explicitly identified as ‘Christian’. Although Rod thought the debriefing was worthwhile, he disagreed with the practice of group prayer. However, he made the self-conscious decision to refrain from raising the issue with the group. Rod recognised the potential of openly opposing the practice in creating ill feelings within the group, disrupting the hotel as a therapeutic place of interpersonal emotional support.

6.5 The Spatial Irony of Staying in Sweetland

Finally, as discussed in the first results chapter, encounters with socio-economic disadvantage often caused participants to become highly reflexive of their own position of economic privilege. Some participants expressed an awareness of the potential irony in staying in a “quite palatial” (James) hotel while ostensibly working to address basic living standards in Nayonbago. Mark’s following account illustrates this awareness:

*I mean, you could live, ah, on site [in Nayonbago]. Ah, it wouldn’t be as comfortable, um, for a lot of the people. And even for myself, you know, I enjoy the air-conditioning and the, jump in the end of the pool, and go to the nice dining room, have the nice toilets and all that sort of stuff.* (Mark, follow-up interview)

This ethical dilemma was negotiated by participants in diverse ways. For example, both Mark and Alan justified the use of the hotel over staying in Nayonbago through reference to the specific needs of aged bodies:

*But, um, yeah, I think at our age, I think that’s quite a good idea to have the good accommodation. I think if you were in your 20s or 30s, you’d live on site and it’d be far less of a problem for you. But I think you’ve got to cater for the*
The resource-intensive corporeal comforts presumably denied older Nayonbago residents were articulated as a necessity for older voluntourists. Participants’ reflexive acknowledgement of the irony in staying in a ‘palatial’ hotel while working in Nayonbago is justified through recourse to a form of cultural relativism and the ‘needs’ of aged bodies. The admitted ‘unfairness’ of the situation is taken as given and unchangeable, illustrated through Mark’s suggestion that, “that’s the way it is. It’s the way we’re used to living.” Older volunteers’ embodied and habitual practices of comfort and cleanliness are here taken as a right.

6.6 Conclusions

Sweetland Hotel was the most significant site of consumption throughout the volunteer project. In the hotel participants consumed energy, food, drinks, and water. The hotel was sustained as a place of restoration through entanglements of discursive webs, embodied encounters, practices, and experiences.

First, participants reproduced a spatial dualism between the inside and outside of Sweetland Hotel, articulated through discourses of ‘wilderness’ and ‘oasis’. Second, participants materialised this binary thinking through various encounters with and practices of hotel air, water, food, and upholstery. These practices and encounters enabled participants to feel the border between the ‘wilds’ of the Philippines and the ‘oasis’ of the hotel. Third, the hotel became a ‘therapeutic landscape’. This therapeutic landscape was (re)made through the
reciprocal relationship between the hotel as an oasis and the extension of empathetic relations of care, encouragement, and help through the daily ‘debriefing’ sessions. Finally, participants were reflexive of the ethical irony produced through the socio-economic juxtaposition of the luxury of the hotel and socio-economic disadvantage of Nayonbago. Both Mark and Alan resolved this through recourse to the specific needs of aged bodies. Seemingly, aged bodies were not too old to help in voluntary work, but too old to give up bodily comfort habituated over a lifetime.
Conclusions

The thesis objective was to better understand the tourism experiences of older voluntourists involved in a project operated by a not-for-profit organisation. In doing so, the project helps to address a lacuna within the current corpus of voluntourism literature identified in Chapter 2. Three research questions guided the project:

1. **How do older volunteers negotiate the encounters within the sites staged for their voluntary labour?**
2. **What are the implications of older voluntourists’ spontaneous encounters with socio-economic disadvantage?**
3. **And how do older volunteers negotiate the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism?**

These research questions were left purposely broad to keep the project open to emergent themes. Inspired by the post-structuralist feminist geographical perspectives discussed in Chapter 2, the thesis explored these questions through emphasising the concept of embodied knowledges. This meant paying attention to the emotional and affective dimensions of bodily encounters, alongside the insights provided by social constructivist approaches in thinking spatially.

On the one hand, this feminist approach allowed possibilities to think outside of predetermined identities based on various sets of us/them binaries, including 'host'/'guest', 'volunteer'/'volunteoured', 'helpers'/'needy', etc. Chapter 2 demonstrated how the vast majority of voluntourism literature has worked within these preconfigured binaries. On the other hand, feminist perspectives work outside set ethical rules or moral codes, instead understanding ethical
relationships as always sensuous, socially constituted, and individually spatially negotiated.

Drawing on this post-structuralist feminist epistemology, Chapter 3 discussed the three primary ethnographic tools used to explore the guiding research questions: participant observation, solicited 'travel diaries', and semi-structured interviews. The ethnographic materials were then subject to analysis, drawing on the techniques of narrative ethnography. This form of analysis emphasises the affective, emotional, and discursive dimensions of texts. The three guiding questions were subsequently addressed in diverse ways across results Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 4 revealed how participants drew on sets of ideas that sustained Nayanbago as a place of 'need'. In this respect, participants reproduced three normative discourses of socio-economic disadvantage. By framing poverty as an object of moral betterment, for instance, Martin, James, and Alan each discursively transformed their experiences of Nayanbago into a catalyst for the 'appreciation' of privilege (see 4.2.1). In turn, the situating of Nayanbago as a place of 'need' justified their roles as 'helpers', capable of addressing this need. Likewise, Chapter 5 demonstrated how participants were complicit in the reproduction of hegemonic identities of 'Rotarian', 'benefactor', and 'volunteer' (see 5.2.1). 'Identity-oriented' performances stabilised these identities, which were (re)produced within enclavic stages of voluntourism. These spaces were understood as being embroiled in discourses, practices, and histories of Rotarian governance. Further, through the exchanging of gifts between the two Rotary clubs, participants were made aware of the reproduction of uneven sets of social relations (see 5.2.2).

However, although participants often drew on sets of ideas that 'fixed' normative understandings of, for instance, 'helpers'/'needy' and 'volunteers'/'voluntoured', close analysis of their sensuous encounters revealed the inherent instability of these social categories. Chapter 4 discussed three such instances of these destabilising encounters. For example, the materialities of aged and needy
bodies encouraged participants to become reflexive of their ambiguous positioning between being both ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’, or ‘helpers’ and ‘needy’ (see 4.3.1). In a similar vein, aged bodies became an entry point through which participants negotiated the ethical tensions engrained in the volunteer project (see 4.3.2). A central question here became: Why had aged participants travelled to the Philippines to engage in unskilled and labour-intensive work? Likewise, both Dawn’s and Alan’s encounters with socio-economic disadvantage—entangled in their embodied biographies—also worked to trouble their roles as helpers (see 4.3.3).

Similarly, in Chapter 5 participants’ embodied encounters with joy were found to disrupt and dissolve otherwise stable sets of social relations. For example, the Cultural Exchange, although ostensibly centring on reproductions of national identity, fostered an affectual closeness across social distance (see 5.3). Through sensuous encounters with sounds, rhythms, motions, and other bodies, Australian volunteers and their hosts felt an affective ‘galvanisation’, akin to Routledge’s (2012) work on ‘sensuous solidarities’. Analogously, participants’ encounters with water during the Dedication Ceremony opened up opportunities for social relations to be reconfigured (see 5.4.2). Through the sensuous and agentic qualities of water, participants’ anticipation of contact with water through ‘play’ fostered shared feelings of joy. As Alan’s account also showed, by facilitating contact between diverse bodies through “hug[ing] together after in joy,” the water play opened opportunities for the creation of visceral and physical bridges across social difference.

Moving away from Nayonbago, the results presented in Chapter 6 explored how participants sustained the hotel as an ‘oasis’ from the ‘wilds’ of the Philippines. The material threshold of the hotel constituted a social divide between the perceived disorder of the streets of Bacolod City and the familiarity and order of the hotel understood as ‘Western’ (see 6.2). Sweetland Hotel facilitated the reproduction of normative understandings of comfort and cleanliness through offering various technologies and particular encounters. These included hotel air, water, food, and upholstery (see 6.3). The practices and encounters with
hotel air, for example, enabled participants to feel the border between inside and outside of the hotel, allowing them to maintain the illusion of an impervious body. Further, the hotel was (re)made as a 'therapeutic landscape' through facilitating the extension of emotional and empathetic relations of care between participants (see 6.4). Last, the juxtaposed encounters with socio-economic inequality between Sweetland and Nayonbago encouraged participants to become reflexive of the spatial irony of staying in a hotel understood as 'palatial' (see 6.5). This tension was navigated through recourse to a combination of cultural relativism and the specific needs of aged bodies.

In sum, this thesis produced unique insights into the embodied geographical knowledges of older voluntourists' experiences. In particular, the materialities of aged bodies became an interesting entry point into the lived, sensuous experiences of older volunteers – an avenue not previously explored in voluntourism literature. However, although offering fresh insights, it must be acknowledged this thesis is only a starting point in exploring the experiences of older volunteers. As an honours thesis, this project is, by necessity, limited in both scope and depth. The thesis focused on a very particular form of voluntourism, with very particular voluntourists, which occurred within a very particular context and history. More specifically, the project examined an ongoing humanitarian project with a history involving a complex relation of organisations, participated in by older Illawarra residents. As such, the project outcomes constitute a starting, rather than end point.

7.1 Avenues for Future Voluntourism Research

The paucity of research currently available on older voluntourists is regrettable within the context of an ageing Australia. That is, with a growing aged and retired subpopulation, the significance of an older volunteering workforce is likely to increase. This will potentially be exacerbated by the increasing infiltration of neoliberalist ideology, which will likely continue to transfer the ethical responsibility of social inequalities to the citizen. In light of this, the thesis concludes by offering three possible future research avenues on the embodied
experiences of older voluntourists. These are primarily based on emergent themes from the materials collected for this thesis but—due to the limitations of the project—were unable to be addressed.

First, initial analysis of participant accounts revealed that the ongoing engagement with the village of Nayonbago meant volunteers were able to establish and sustain close relationships with residents. These relationships often cut through both social and economic difference. Participants were frequently welcomed into Nayonbago residents' homes, offered food, and kept in contract through the year via surface mail. As such, there are two manifest opportunities for research here. First, how do voluntourists sustain and rupture destination communities as 'home'? And, second, how does voluntourism facilitate the generation of friendships across social difference? Both of these are currently un- or under-investigated aspects of voluntourism.

Second, significantly, tourist mobilities are currently an entirely unexplored aspect of voluntourism. Although the voluntourists in this study spent the majority of their time in either Nayonbago or Sweetland Hotel, the next most significant 'sites' were en route. This included travelling between the hotel and sites of labour, as well as through the city. Various modes of transportation—including walking, trishaws, jeepneys\textsuperscript{18}, and air-conditioned minivans—were used and received by participants in diverse ways. Exploring the practices and experiences of older voluntourists' use of transport would thus be an interesting and important avenue of research in examining the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism.

Last but not least, there are surplus opportunities for research on the experiences of the intended beneficiaries of voluntourism. As highlighted in Chapter 2, there is a dearth of research exploring the experiences of the so-called voluntoured. Feminist geographical perspectives that explore the embodied and sensuous experiences of the intended beneficiaries are absent from the

\textsuperscript{18} The 'jeepney' is the most common form of public transport in the Philippines. Very simply, jeepneys are small, ex-army trucks, retrofitted with open-sided bench seating (depicted in Figure 4.2). This form of transport is cheap and relatively fast, but often affected by overcrowding.
literature. Thus, in this respect, there is a discernible silence in the voluntourism literature.

Each of these potential avenues for future research would enrich our understandings of the multiplicities of voluntourism experiences. The experiences of voluntourists are incredibly nuanced and complex, and feminist geographical perspectives offer unique insights in helping to unravel the ethical implications of the industry.
References


INITIAL APPLICATION APPROVAL - Conditional
In reply please quote: HE12/488
21 December 2012

Associate Professor Gordon Waitt
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Building 41
University of Wollongong

Dear Associate Professor Waitt,

I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved. However, please provide permission from Rotary to conduct the research. The email supplied only provides a contact.

Ethics Number: HE12/488

Project Title: Cultures of Volunteer travel

Researchers: A/Professor Gordon Waitt, Ms Ryan Frazer

Approval Date: 20 December 2012

Expiry Date: 19 December 2013

The University of Wollongong/Ilawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the National Statement and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document.

A condition of approval by the HREC is the submission of a progress report annually and a final report on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rso/ethics/UOW009385.html. This report must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee also requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
unforseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Please note that approvals are granted for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

A/Professor Garry Hoban
Chair, Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Cultures of Volunteer Travel

The Project: Why do people volunteer to travel? The project aim is to better understand the practices, expectations, experiences and personal transformations from travel and volunteer work. This project hopes to identify the challenges and frustrations of volunteer travel and the creativity involved in regards to how such issues are dealt with.

The Focus: The focus of this project is on the role volunteer travel in the lives mature aged Australians, and why they volunteer. The key questions driving this project are: What motivates people to volunteer? What sorts of expectations do volunteers have? What does volunteering involve? What kinds of experiences do volunteers have while volunteering? What occurs to people as a result of volunteering?

What you will be asked to do: Participating in this project involves: a pre-trip conversation around your motivations, expectations, ideas and previous experiences of volunteering – with your permission, this conversation will be audiotaped and transcribed; if you choose, creating a written volunteer travel diary detailing the where, what, why and how you negotiate volunteering; sharing some of the photographs you take while volunteering; and, finally, if you wish, a post-trip conversation that reflects upon your experiences of volunteering.

You are invited to request a copy of the transcript, and to submit edits/revisions. You will also be asked if you wish to be given a pseudonym as direct quotations from the interview and diary may be used in scholarly publications.

Confidentiality will be maintained in all publications and presentations on the research unless you indicate in the consent form that you are willing to be identified. Access to the transcripts is only available to the researchers. Further, if during the project participants disclose facts about illegal activities, then the researcher’s duty of confidentiality is overridden by the public duty to disclose to the police the facts about felonies.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation and any data that you have provided within a reasonable time frame for the project. In this instance this would normally be around two months after the transcription of the interview. Withdrawal from the project will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

The Project Organizer: If you have any enquiries about the research please contact: Dr Gordon Waitt (02 4221 3684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au) or Ryan Frazer (rf221@uowmail.edu.au). This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form for Participants

Cultures of Volunteer Travel

Ryan Frazer
School of Earth and Environmental Science, Faculty of Science

I have been given information about ‘Cultures of Volunteer Travel’. I have had an opportunity to discuss the research project with Ryan Frazer, who is conducting this research through the University of Wollongong. At this time, I have asked any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research. I understand that this includes an initial pre-trip conversation-style interview for around 30 minutes to one hour, and/or creating a photo or written diary about my experiences of volunteering, and a follow-up post-trip conversation-style interview for around 30 minutes to one hour.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary; I am free to withdraw from this research at any time. My withdrawal from the project will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about this research, I can contact Dr Gordon Waitt (02 4221 3684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au). If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

Please tick the following activities in which you would like to participate:

☐ A pre-trip conversation-style interview of 30 minutes to 1 hour held in a convenient place

☐ Creating a written diary about your experiences of volunteer travel

☐ Sharing photographs you take as a volunteer traveler

☐ A post-trip conversation-style interview of 30 minutes to 1 hour held in a convenient place

Please tick one of the following

☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of my given name

☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of a pseudonym

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for an Honours thesis, scholarly publications, conference presentations and reports, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed: ........................................
Date: ......................................

Name (please print): ........................................

Terms and conditions:
I understand that my personal particulars will be stored by Gordon Waitt, University of Wollongong, for a minimum of five years for record keeping and administrative purposes only and will not be supplied to any other person or organization for any other purpose.
Appendix D: Table displaying data collected from participants

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<thead>
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<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Pre-trip Interview</th>
<th>Follow-up Interview</th>
<th>Travel Diary</th>
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</thead>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary (Team Leader)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Solicited Travel Diary

“Cultures of Volunteer Travel” Diary

This project is trying to better understand the experiences and practices of volunteer travel.

The project is investigating both the exceptional moments of volunteering (experiences of joy, frustration, sadness, etc), as well as what might be thought of as the more mundane or everyday moments (walking, catching public transport, washing clothes, eating, hygiene, etc).

The diary has a number of prompts to help guide you. However, you should not constrain your creativity! We are interested in your ‘gut reactions’, your emotions, what you thought about, as well as what you found yourself doing while volunteering.

To help give structure to your diary we would like you to document the date, time and place.

If you have any questions, please contact Ryan Frazer at rf221@uowmail.edu.au, or 0411 803 583.

THANK YOU
Prompt Questions

We wish to understand both the exceptional and everyday moments of your volunteering experience. The following sets of questions are simply meant to act as prompts, not prescriptions, and you are encouraged to be as creative as you like with your entries.

The Exceptional Moments:
- What are the exceptional moments of today?
- What happened?
- How did you respond emotionally?
- What was your ‘gut reaction’?
- What did you find yourself thinking about?
- What did you find yourself doing?

The Everyday Moments:
- What are some of the more mundane moments of today?
- For example, think about times when you may have been forced to think about your body because of your involvement in an everyday activity, such as purchasing food, eating, sleeping, washing clothes, going to the toilet, cleaning your teeth, having a shower/bath.
- How did you respond emotionally?
- What was your ‘gut reaction’?
- What did you find yourself thinking about?
- What did you find yourself doing?
Appendix F: Pre-trip Interview Schedule

Pre-trip Interview Schedule – semi structured, conversational

Section One: Travel/Lifecourse
Tell me about some of your travel experiences.
How do you fit travel into your life?
Has the type of travel you enjoy changed over your life?

Section Two: Volunteering
Why volunteer generally?
Can you please sketch what you understand as ‘volunteer travel’?
Why volunteer travel?
Why are you volunteering for the 2013 trip?

Section Three: The Destination
What do you know about the places you are volunteering?
What are you hoping to do?
What are you anticipating as the biggest challenge(s)?
What are you anticipating as the reward(s) of volunteering?

Section Four
An opportunity for the participant to raise issues at the end.
Appendix G: Follow-up Interview Schedule

FOR NEW PARTICIPANTS ONLY

0. Background Questions

Lifecourse:
• The participant’s background in volunteering and travel

Motivations for Volunteering:
• Why volunteer, generally?
• Why volunteer for this trip, specifically?

FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

Icebreaker: What material things did you bring back from the Philippines? Why?

1. People and Places

Photos (max. of 3x each)
• The sites of volunteer labour
• Formal or official settings (e.g. ceremonies, official dinners, meetings)
• ‘Tourist’ sites and locations
• The hotel (excluding any official events that took place there)
• The volunteering group
• The people and places of Kabugwason
• The people and places of Bacolod and Negros more broadly

2. Challenges and Rewards

We’re now going to explore the challenges and rewards of the volunteering trip to the Philippines:
• Challenges
• Rewards
• Surprises

3. Emotional Labour

Volunteer labour work can be emotional work:
• Can you talk about some of the moments where you felt energised by the work?
• Can you talk about some of the moments where you felt your energy was being drained?

4. Impact

Going to go up through geographical scales, I wanted to explore whether your volunteering experience has changed the way you understand:
• Yourself (also, has it changed your values/behaviour?)
• Your home
• Your suburb/city
• Australia

Has it changed the way you understand:
• The Philippines
• Poverty/affluence/inequality
• Volunteer work
• Travel

5. Organisation
• Did you have any issues with how the project was run?
• What, if anything, would you have done differently?
• Did it meet your expectations?

FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO HAD BEEN BEFORE
• In what ways, if any, was this trip different to previous years?
• Did having someone younger in the group change the group dynamics?

FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS
• Will you go again? Why, or why not?
• Is there anything else you think I should know about, or am missing here?